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An inquiry into the basis of
true Christian unity

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AN INQUIRY
INTO
THE BASIS
OF
TRUE CHRISTIAN UNITY.

BY THE
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"THOMAS à KEMPIS AND THE BROTHERS OF COMMON LIFE,"
"THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF THE CHURCH,"
ETC., ETC.

VOLUME I.

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P R E F A C E .

MANY earnest and enlightened Christians, laying to heart the sad evils of the divisions and dissensions which so greatly distract and disgrace the religious world, have become more anxious of late years to find out some means or way for bringing together again those who are living separated from one another—or at least the better part of those who have become estranged: and to establish some more definite bond of Christian unity, than has yet been found in these modern times. They are not satisfied with what has been done; the attempts which have been made to this end have not answered as they could wish. And the question is now one of transcendent moment and interest, as to what shall be done—what steps shall be taken?

Bacon, in one of his moral essays, says: “I knew a wise man that had it for a byword, when he saw men hasten to a conclusion, ‘stay a little, that we may make an end the sooner.’” And the wisdom of it surely consisted in this, that before entering upon any matter of great consequence, it is most desirable to consider it well and carefully first, lest by not doing so, you take a wrong course, or have occasion afterwards to alter, come to another view, and have to undo what has been done, as not

practicable or suitable to effect what you wish to accomplish; and so, for want of a thorough consideration at the beginning, much time is wasted; besides which, men become disheartened, and lose confidence in the undertaking. Thus, in building a house, or laying down a railway, how necessary it is to take a good survey of the ground, and to know well what you purpose to do beforehand; even before making your plans; and even then, when you have drawn them out, how important it is to look particularly to the many points and details that will meet you in the work, before finally entering upon the business.

And if this is so necessary in any material business, it is equally, if not more so, in spiritual matters, particularly that of the true unity of Christians; hence this INQUIRY. And it seems the more needful because of the diversity of views that prevail among those that are separated; and not only because the multiplication of sects have increased of late years, but because several of them are now of some standing, have a considerable following, and their views should meet with some consideration, and be taken into account. And then another point arises: whether there is not a danger, which is greatly increased, of overlooking the old landmarks; lest, by paying too much attention to the loud advocates of differing systems which demand a hearing, the old paths should become obliterated, covered over, or lost sight of.

Then inquiry should be made as to these "old paths," what they are, and how they may be surely ascertained and discovered. Whether they are not laid down on the essential principles of right and truth, which are of enduring obligation, and whether they do not afford us a solution of the great problem, as to how true Christian unity may exist. Whether one and all parties should not lay aside their own peculiar views and prejudices; and take these old landmarks as their starting point and guide to find and trace out the way in which we should endeavour to discover and establish a basis of unity for all true Christians; though dissensions and divisions may still, to some extent, abound.

Then it will be the more necessary to recall attention to the first principles of the Church or Kingdom of Christ; and whether they have not in them the very essential properties of preserving unity in the great body of Christians. To search out and see how the Primitive Christians, who were received into the fellowship of the Apostles, were enabled to be as one people, and the means by which they continued to maintain the unity of the body? And then, how they agreed with, and contained in them those fundamental conditions requisite for upholding any kind of union in the world, as well as in religion—in a nation, corporation, or company, as well as in the great body of Christians.

And as past history is one of the most valuable of teachers, it will be desirable to consider, somewhat,

the history of unity in the Church—the struggle to maintain it, the departure from its basis, the sad consequences of this departure, the attempts made at the Reformation to return to the ancient Basis of Unity, how the Papacy endeavoured to strangle and frustrate the measures, the multiplication of sects caused thereby, their disregard to the unity of Christians according to the will and design of Christ and His Apostles,—and then, how necessary it is still to keep in mind those leading principles, which serve as a foundation for unity. And finally, possessing our minds more clearly and fully as to what these principles are, and the authority and weight which they should carry; to consider again, more thoroughly, the evidence which the Holy Scriptures—accepted by all Christians—give us on the momentous question; and how it is corroborated by the testimony of various authors among the Primitive Christians. It is then, and not till then, that we shall be in a position to determine what shall be done, and what steps shall be taken, for formulating what shall, in future, be the basis of true Christian unity.

I have been much indebted to numerous authors, to whose works I constantly refer, especially on the more important points where proofs seem necessary. But I may here, in general, mention the volumes of the Ante-Nicene, and some of the Post-Nicene Fathers, and the histories of Eusebius, Socrates Scholasticus, and Bede: several of the Anglo-Catholic Divines, both of earlier and more recent date: Bingham and

Dr. Smith's works on Christian Antiquities; reports from the *Guardian*, and a few other newspapers, relative to current events: the Church histories of Mosheim, Collier, Gieseler, Milman, Palmer, and Robertson; and various commentators, especially Olhausen, Bengel, Hammond, Bloomfield, and Wordsworth.

Eastbourne,

June, 1888.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EVILS OF DIVISIONS.

Divisions too manifest to be denied.—Better realised by looking at them in detail.—Looking at them in the aggregate will show how wide-spread they are.—The evils consequent upon them.—(1) Their deteriorating and discouraging influence.—(2) They bring a scandal and reproach upon Christianity.—(3) Hinder the spread of the Gospel in missionary efforts both at home and abroad.—(4) A great waste of strength and influence in the cause of Christ.—(5) They tend to break up the unity of a nation, and set one section of the people against another.—(6) They contribute to make the Word of God of none effect.—(7) They set at nought the will and design of Christ, regarding the unity of Christians.—(8) They further the work and purpose of Satan in bringing discord and confusion into Christ's Kingdom.—Is there no remedy for this sad state of things?

CHAPTER II.

FINDING A BASIS OF UNITY.

These evils regarded as so many arguments for unity.—The majority of Christians have so much in common.—More perfect obedience to Christ's will the great secret of unity.—The unity of Christians one great object of Christ's work on earth.—The Bible our standard.—Its definite sense attained through the writings of the Primitive Christians.—God's Will of old to set up a Kingdom or Church for all nations.—The Christian

Church founded by Christ and His Apostles, before ever the New Testament Scriptures were written.—God gave these Scriptures through His Church, and of them she became a witness and a guardian.—The Apostles formed a model of the Church at Jerusalem before they separated.—Wherever they preached the Gospel, they planted the Church on the same lines, which they had agreed upon all together.—Then circumstances in the Providence of God led them to write these Scriptures.—These Scriptures bear witness to the existence of the Church and its extension to distant lands.—It formed a basis of unity for all Christians, which they are exhorted to heed.

CHAPTER III.

AN AWAKENED DESIRE FOR UNITY.

This is manifested in many ways and in many places.—Former attempts at unity in recent times.—“The Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christendom.”—“The Evangelical Alliance.”—“The Home Reunion Society.”—“The Young Men’s Christian Association.”—The still more recent yearnings for unity.—The correspondence between the Bishop of Winchester and the Rev. Canon Wilberforce.—The directions given to the Clergy by the Bishops of the Southern Province.—The kindly relations with Nonconformists to be cultivated.—How Nonconformists regard the Church.—The Address of the Chairman of the Congregational Union.—The question, “Is a State Church compatible with true Christian Unity?”—The desire for unity abroad.—The last Triennial Convention of the American Church (1886).—The Response to the Bishops’ Address from the Conference of the Congregational Churches, and from the Presbyterians of New York.—The General Synod of the Australian Church on Unity (1886).—That of Capetown, South Africa (1887).—This simultaneous movement suggests a higher influence at work.

CHAPTER IV.

UNITY AMONG THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

An answer to those who would let things continue as they are.—And to those who would defend these divisions as necessary.—The difference between Modern and Primitive Christianity.—The rapid development of the Church whilst it continued as *one* body.—This is the more remarkable under the circumstances, when the eye-witnesses of the Gospel were dead, and the age of miracles was over.—Notwithstanding also the terrible persecutions, and the heresies and schisms which broke out.—Still unity was their law and creed.—The influence of this unity on themselves, and on the world around them.—The Christians a people and brotherhood living the Scriptural life.—Unity their glory and strength.—Christians everywhere seen and recognised by the world as *one body in Christ*.

CHAPTER V.

THE UNITY OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS UPHELD BY CAREFUL TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE.

None admitted to the Church but those who had been well prepared and tested.—The different classes of Catechumens.—Every person had a place in the Church, and was individually cared for and watched over.—Indifference, waywardness, or sinfulness early noticed and corrected.—The system of Church discipline.—Excommunications.—The restoration of penitents.—Penance imposed, but not as a meritorious act.—The salutary influence of penitential discipline.—(1) In maintaining the purity of the Church.—(2) In helping the fallen to recover themselves out of their sin, or some snare of the devil.—(3) In deterring others from giving way to sin or indifference.—(4) In impressing upon the world that the Christians continuing in one body were a holy people, living for a blessed immortality.—If divisions

had been allowed in the Church, this careful training and discipline would have been next to impossible.—It is a testimony that some real unity then existed among the Primitive Christians.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE DEFINITE AND SETTLED FORM OF GOVERNMENT ESSENTIALLY NECESSARY TO ABIDING UNITY.

The fundamental principle of unity among Christians not well understood.—The principle kept in view in separate divisions, but overlooked when applied to the whole body.—And yet Scripture requires one rule for all Christians.—Experience teaches us the necessity of it in common life.—In the government of a nation.—In the command and efficiency of the Army and Navy.—In the management of a railway company, where the direction must be one.—The same principle of government designed for the unity of Christians in the Church.—There were not two or three kinds of government in the Primitive Church, but one only.—The government of the Church was not left by Christ and His Apostles in the hands of one man.—Nor yet in the hands of all Christians, nor even in the hands of all the ministers of the Church.—But in the hands of the Episcopate.—The duties of which were first exercised by the Apostles, and handed on to others, as the One Divine Rule.

CHAPTER VII.

EVIDENCE FROM THE APOSTOLICAL CANONS.

Many witnesses to testify to the government that existed among the Primitive Christians.—The special evidence from the Apostolical Canons—Their authority, as the outcome and development of the Apostles' rule.—Several of them given as instances.—Their testimony.—Their number and genuineness.—They show that a constitution and government for Christians was in

existence.—This constitution and rule formed the basis of true Christian unity.—The great change in the outward condition of Christians.—The Diocletian Persecution.—Contrasted with the advent of Constantine.—The story of his adopting the cross as his standard.—His protection of Christians.—The justice, privileges, and favours accorded to them.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNITY MAINTAINED UNDER ALTERED CONDITIONS.

How the Church was affected by its alliance with the Empire.—Was its constitution, government, or unity changed?—The Arian heresy.—Constantine's error in attempting to reconcile it with the unity of the Church.—His convening the First General Council at Nice, A.D. 325.—The history of Arius.—His opposition to his Bishop, and his teaching false doctrine.—His excommunication, and yet his views infect the Church.—The character and business of the Nicene Council.—Constantine assists the Bishops in coming to a conclusion.—The Nicene Creed drawn up to testify the belief of the Church in the Divinity of Christ.—Canons decreed for preserving order in the Church.—Constantine gives the force of law to their decisions.—The unity of the Church greatly established.—The celibacy of the Clergy not to be enforced.—Constantine's behaviour to the Fathers of the Council.—No appearance of Presbyterian or Congregational rule in the Church.—Nor yet of any Papal authority being acknowledged.—The only recognised government hitherto discernible is that of the Episcopacy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN THE BASIS OF UNITY.

Constantine afterwards favours Arianism.—The firmness of St. Athanasius.—He is condemned by a packed Council.—He is deposed and banished.—He confronts the Em-

peror, who is inclined to do him justice.—But still listens to his enemies.—Arius is to be received back into the Church at Constantinople.—The Patriarch protests against it, and appeals to God.—The tragical end of Arius.—Athanasius restored to his See, but has to fly for his life again and again.—The eventual triumph of the Catholic Faith before the death of Athanasius.—Other heresies arise.—The Macedonian.—The Second General Council of the Church called.—The Personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost acknowledged.—Words defining these added to the Nicene Creed.—The Invasion of Christian countries by heathen tribes.—The Pelagian Heresy.—The Donatist Schism.—The Apollinarian Heresy.—The Nestorian.—The Third General Council of the Church at Ephesus.—The Eutychean Heresy.—The Fourth General Council at Chalcedon.—The authority of the See of Constantinople equal to that of Rome.—The importance of the first Four General Councils.—No question about the Episcopal Government of the Church ever raised.—The Fifth General Council.—The basis of unity for Christians defined.

CHAPTER X.

THE GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE BASIS OF UNITY.

The issue of the struggles only consolidates the Basis of Unity.—Able Defenders raised up.—Some definite agreement come to on all disputed points.—The decline of Heresy and Schism.—The Mahometan Apostacy swallows up many of those who were separated.—The general acceptance of the Basis of Unity led to greater Missionary enterprise.—The Missions of St. Patrick, Columba, Columban, and St. Augustine.—Augustine meets the British Bishops, who would not submit to him or the Pope.—The terrible condition of the British Church, and how it was resuscitated.—The scheme of Theodore in uniting both successions of Bishops.—The Foundation on which the English Church rests.—Its agreement with the Basis settled in the early Councils

of the Church.—Theodore and Chad.—Wilfrid and the Sussex Pagans.—The large-hearted liberality of the early English Churchmen in making endowments.—The Ministrations of the Church led to the greater civilisation of the people.—The Unity of the Church led the way to the Unity of the Nation.—Other devoted Missionaries went forth from the English Church for the conversion of other parts of Europe.—The general use of the Athanasian Creed, a further evidence of the unity that existed.—Objections to it answered.

CHAPTER XI.

A DEPARTURE FROM THE BASIS OF UNITY.

Six Cycles of three hundred years in the History of the Church.—The Reformation.—The Council of Trent.—The Order of Jesuits.—The Vatican Council.—Is the Church of Rome the Catholic Church?—The lesson derived from the Fifth General Council.—What happened at the Sixth General Council.—No Appeals to be made to Rome.—Some time elapsed before the Papacy acquired power.—Then the dangers of the system begin to appear.—Witnessed in the so-called Seventh General Council.—The attempt to force on the Church the Worship of Images.—The Independency of the other Churches still retained.—The Papal System of Unity contrasted with the Catholic System.—The evil results of the departure from the Unity of the Catholic Rule.—Increased by the Pope obtaining greater power.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SAD CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DEPARTURE FROM THE BASIS OF UNITY.

The encroachments and arbitrary exactions of the Papacy.—The Independency of the Church of England proved long before the Reformation.—Henry VIII. threw off the yoke of the Pope.—But he otherwise opposed the

Reformation of the Church of England.—This was effected in Edward VIth's reign, on the lines of Primitive Christianity.—The Books of Common Prayer.—The Forty-two Articles of Religion.—The Efforts of the Papists to overthrow the Reformation.—The Multiplication of Dissenters.—The difference between the Dissenters abroad and in England.—The Council of Trent tried to impose illegal terms of Communion in the Church.—Its Character.—The Vatican Council, and the serious opposition made to declaring the Infallibility of the Pope.—The Lambeth Conference.—The position and responsibility of the Anglican Bishops, as Bishops also of the whole Church.—Conferring with those who differ.

ERRATA IN VOL I.

- Page 239—After the Decian Persecution, another of a less severe character should have been alluded to : the Valerian, A.D. 257.
- „ 241—It was not in the Diocletian Persecution that the Great Bishop Cyprian suffered martyrdom, but in the Valerian, A.D. 258.

CHAPTER I.

THE EVILS OF DIVISIONS.

I SUPPOSE it is unnecessary to prove the existence of divisions and dissensions among Christians. The fact is patent to all, and few persons will be found to deny it, however much they may differ about their origin and nature. Their existence, then, may be taken for granted at once, without any more words.

To realize the nature of them, however, and how Christians are affected by them, it will be necessary to take a brief glance at their results or the consequences, in detail as well as in the aggregate. It is not sufficient to show that there are large branches of the Church, or large bodies of Christians, separated from, and at variance with one another. To bring the matter home to us more truly we must confine ourselves to some single locality or district, and ascertain the behaviour and disposition of Christians in general towards those who should be their brethren in the Lord.

Fixing our minds, then, upon some one given place or another, mark what a want of sympathy and regard there is between the members of one separated body and those of another; not only between Church-people and Dissenters, but between those that belong to the differing bodies of Dissenters. Indeed, in some large and populous places, you will find that Dissenters

have broken away from original Dissenting bodies, and multiplied; so that we may behold Dissent bearing seed after its own kind, like every green herb and every beast of the field: as may be seen in the case of the Baptists and Wesleyans. And though those of the parent body of Dissenters, as well as those who separate from it, will allow, according to their principle, that every man has a right to please himself—that there is religious liberty for all, yet it must be allowed that these divisions separate those that should be as chief friends, and breed much dissension and ill-will. Mark how they become estranged from one another, and more distant towards those who choose to differ from them. They must have a separate building to worship in; they will pass and repass each other on the Sunday, and give but a cold look, if even they deign to recognise those who thus choose to think and act differently to them. But even in smaller districts, you will find those who profess and call themselves Christians, having different places of worship; for besides the Church, how often will you find a Baptist Chapel and a Wesleyan, a Roman Catholic or a Presbyterian, which in itself is an open avowal of disagreement and separation, whereby Christian people are alienated from each other.

Without then, at present, saying who are right or wrong, or who are to blame for this state of things; it is, without doubt, clearly inconsistent with the precepts of the New Testament, which put before

our view a wholly different course as to the manner in which Christians are to live together as neighbours. For it is evident, that in whatever place they may be dwelling, all they who profess to believe in Christ, and to be His followers, are to be perfectly joined together, and to mind the same things, so that there be no contentions among them, and that they live by the same rule and faith; and that as Christians they may be known to all the world, and regarded as the members of Christ's body and household, the Church, living together in every locality as one compact and friendly company, in godly union and fellowship.

And when we come to consider the number of Christians belonging to different communities everywhere in Christendom, we shall be the better able to gain a general view of the wide extent and pervading nature of those dissensions and divisions. We have only to call to mind the variance and discord, the bitter animosities, and constant antagonism that exist between the Churches in the East and those in the West—between the Greek and Latin Christians; between the Roman Catholics everywhere and those opposed to them. For though to the credit of the Eastern Churches, they, according to the rule of the ancient Church of Christ, abstain from propagandism in territories which do not belong to them, and only send their clergy to minister to their co-religionists that may be sojourning in foreign countries; yet it is far otherwise with the Roman

Catholics, who, claiming the whole world as theirs, not only carry on offensive operations, trying to create discord and schism in this land where the Church of Christ has been already planted in its integrity, but also among all the Churches of the East, causing not only divisions, but great bitterness of feeling and serious disturbances, which not unfrequently have led to bloodshed, as history will testify.

And further when we think of the oppositions existing between those belonging to the Church of England, and the various communities of Dissenters, now numbering, from the last returns, upwards of two hundred, all differing in some one point or another, of greater or less moment: and not only the opposition and ill feeling to the Church which these Dissenters everywhere maintain, but the opposition and dissension which exist also among themselves, we shall the more easily comprehend how wide-spread, and almost universal the differences and animosities among Christians are, and the which are so contrary to the principles of their holy religion. And when we count up the aggregate number of these divisions, be they great or small, and consider how they are distributed over the country, and carry their contentions and divisions with them, so that you can rarely enter a village or parish but what you encounter them, it becomes the more apparent how huge and extensive the evil is.

Moreover, it must be noticed that these separations and estrangements of Christians are often fostered,

kept alive, and intensified by the leaders of these divisions, by professed preachers of the Gospel, whose private interests, they think, are better served thereby. Hence mean insinuations are bandied about, and a constant round of abuse kept up, in the hope of gaining some adherents from the communities they so unbecomingly calumniate: but the evil does not stop here, for not unfrequently, vexatious controversy, inveterate feuds, and malicious backbiting are engendered thereby. All this, without doubt, must grievously alter the character and quality of the Christianity they profess. No one can engage in these dissensions without being somehow harmed thereby; and others, who would live in peace and "pass along life's common road in cheerful godliness," are affected by them. Not only are the several ministers of religion inclined to harbour within their hearts thoughts and dispositions not in keeping with the Gospel they preach, but the views and feelings of those who listen to them will become tainted by their example and words. Many a tale of woe and bitterness might be told arising therefrom in times past; but even at the present time what can be worse, what more unbecoming Christians professing godliness, than for some of them to band together in an attempt to rob and overthrow the Church, and turn her people out homeless and destitute as regards the provision they inherit for their spiritual necessities? However specious the sophistry of these men, their actions shew how far they have departed from the

spirit of the Gospel, and how deteriorating an influence these divisions and dissensions have upon them.

Melancthon, the celebrated German reformer, the friend of Luther, and accounted one of the wisest and greatest men of his age, endeavoured to shew his countrymen the great danger and disadvantage it was to Christianity in general that it should be broken up into opposing sections; and accordingly he illustrated his argument by an allegorical picture of the wolves and the dogs, who were marching onwards to fight one against the other. The wolves, that they might better know the strength of their adversary, sent forth a master wolf as their scout. The scout returned, and told the wolves that the dogs were indeed more in number, but yet, that they should not be discouraged; for he observed that the dogs were not one like another; a few mastiffs there were, but the most were little ones, which could only bark, but not bite, and would be afraid of their own shadow. Another thing also he observed, which should much encourage them, and that was, that the dogs marched as if they were more offended at themselves than with us; not keeping their ranks, but grinning and snarling, and biting and tearing one another, as if they would save us the labour of it. And therefore let us march on resolutely, for our enemies are their own enemies; enemies to themselves and their own peace; they bite and devour each other, and therefore we shall certainly overcome them. Though a kingdom or Church be never so well provided, yet

notwithstanding, if divisions and heart-burnings get among its members, like a spreading gangrene, they will infect the whole; and like a breach in the walls of a besieged city they will let in the enemy to destroy it. Nay, though there should be a kingdom of saints, if differences and distractions get within that kingdom, they will, like the worm in Jonah's gourd, eat up all the happiness of it in one night. Hence we should seriously lay to heart the great danger of our unhappy divisions, and perceive the great advantage, safety, and comfort of unity among Christians.

If, however, we would become more fully possessed with the desirability and necessity of true Christian Unity, we must consider more particularly and distinctly how lamentable and disastrous the evils of dissensions and divisions are in various ways. It will not be lost time if we tarry awhile to take a view of these separately, for then we shall see more clearly how hateful and hurtful they are. The sight of them will surely beget in us a detestation of this state of things; lead us to set our faces the more against that which has been the cause of them; and to yearn the more for a greater return to unity, as well as to do what in our power we can to further it. It is the sight and more perfect understanding of these evils that have led a few large-hearted and earnest-minded Christians to inquire and seek after some remedy; to be anxious to diminish the evils, if they cannot entirely put an end to them; to long more dearly for peace and concord; feeling sure that it

will be the bringing in of new life and power to Christianity, the dawn of a brighter and happier day, after a dark and dreary night of much discord and disunion.

As a physician before prescribing a cure for his patient will enquire after the ailments and signs of his illness, so let us not shrink to bring out as plainly and as honestly as we can, some of the particular evils of our lamentable divisions: in the hope that it may lead the way to a restoration of health in the great body of Christians. The evils are many and grievous.

(1.) First, these divisions and dissensions tend to introduce and foster an inferior, if not a spurious kind of religion: one in which many of the higher graces of Christianity are wanting; such as humility, teachableness of spirit, following the things that make for peace, obedience to those who are over them in the Lord, the love of the Brotherhood of Christ; and instead thereof we have discontent, restlessness, and strife, a loud profession and boasting of religious feelings, self-conceit, hypocrisy, bitterness of spirit, and evil-speaking. These largely permeate the Christianity of the present day, and are utterly inconsistent with the example of Christ our Master, who said, "Take my yoke upon you, and *learn* of me: for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And others are affected thereby. Not only are the true followers of Christ much distressed and disheartened by such an exhibi-

tion of Christianity, but doubts and perplexities are apt to arise and disquiet them as to the reality of Christian life, and the power of divine faith, when they see those whom they regard as good men, leaders and teachers of Christianity, so contentious, standing aloof from, and even decrying one another. Besides, what a distinct loss of Christian fellowship and sympathy arises therefrom, not only among those who teach, but among those who wish to learn: a loss of that which so much sweetens the pilgrimage of life, and which we all so greatly need as we journey through this vale of tears, where we are sure to meet with many temptations, crosses, and sorrows.

(2.) But what is more distressing, these divisions and dissensions bring a sad scandal upon Christianity. They bring a reproach upon our holy religion! Men of the world see and hear of the disagreements that continually arise, the harsh words that are uttered, and the want of charity and goodwill that are exhibited by one set or sect of Christians against others who differ from them; and are apt to ask, "Is this your Christianity, then? I had rather be as I am." And pointing the finger of scorn to this or that instance, they exclaim—not as it was said of old, "See how these Christians love one another," but, "See how these Christians hate one another." And when at times, as is the case, those who have been indifferent to religion, are awakened to a better sense of and desire for a more godly life, are they not frequently deterred from embracing it as they should do, by the

discords and jealousies which are manifested among the professors of Christianity? Are not some of them kept aloof from openly confessing Christ, and even induced to become again indifferent about their salvation, by a feeling stealing into their minds, that if these leading religious men cannot agree to be united: if Christians cannot live together in the place where they dwell, as Christ would have them, in brotherly love, as the members of His household and family, they had better not join any of these divisions, since they would be sure to displease some; or hesitate from perplexity as to which would be the right body? It may be said, that, independently of these quarrels, the desire for their own salvation should lead men heartily to embrace Christianity in one form or another. Yes, it ought, we confess; but yet is it not often otherwise? Do we not know how ready the heart of man is to find some excuse for not closing in with Christ's offer of mercy, and how willing to justify itself for its negligence and indifference to the blessing of religion? And so it comes to pass that many a one that is weak in the faith, or wants encouragement, is lost; and a handle for this is found in the disputes and want of unity among Christians.

(3.) Besides, is it not known, what an obstacle these divisions and dissensions are to *the heathen* embracing Christianity at all? There is something that sadly hinders the spread of the Gospel in Heathen lands, notwithstanding the great expenditure of money, and the vigorous efforts that are made for the con-

version of the inhabitants. It was not so in the time of the Primitive Christians, as we shall shortly see; how is it that we fail so sadly now? One chief cause is that we are not united as Christians in one body. Various Christian bodies, unable to agree among themselves, enter upon the same fields of missionary labour; what can you expect? Their several ministers, such as the Roman Catholic, the Wesleyan, the Baptist, and the Church of England, go and preach to the same people living in the same district or neighbourhood: and they severally urge those who listen to them to seek after the welfare of their souls by joining the body to which the preacher belongs. But if some are inclined to give a favourable hearing to one of these ministers, ere long the representative of another religious body comes with the Gospel tidings of Salvation, and tells them that they are wrong in joining those to whom they have first listened, and that the communion of Christians that he belongs to is the right body, where they will be the safest, and gain the most good. These people, then, are apt in their simplicity to become perplexed, feel foolish in their ignorance of the differences that exist, think that it is strange,—that there must be something wrong somehow, waver or hold back; saying, as it has happened in some cases—though the feeling may not be so openly expressed in most—“When you Christians can agree among yourselves then we will listen to you.”

And even when the heathen are converted and joined to some communion, they will sooner or later

come into contact with the preachers of other denominations, who will try to convince them that the right way is to join the body they represent: and so, often not knowing what to do, or whom to believe, they lose faith, begin to grow lukewarm, if they do not altogether return to their former ways. Thus these divisions and dissensions become a serious hindrance to the spread of the Gospel: they in a great measure neutralize and bring to nought the labours of many excellent and devoted men in preaching the Christian religion. Abroad, then, as well as at home, it must be seen how hurtful and detrimental these divisions and dissensions are to individual souls, and to the real interests and advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

(4.) But there is another thing to be noticed. Both at home and abroad there is a great waste of strength and influence: and the earnest preachers of the Gospel themselves become discouraged when they are opposed and obstructed in their ministrations by other earnest-minded men, who like themselves profess to be ministers of Christ. And the more sincere these men are in their labours, the more keenly do they feel these obstructions. Instead of these servants of the One Lord and Saviour being a help and encouragement to each other, they become a source of constant irritation and hindrance; and this mainly from the divisions and dissensions which everywhere prevail. If they had all been of one heart and one soul, as those who went forth at the first to make

known the glad tidings of salvation, and could all agree to teach the grand truths of our holy religion in the same way, with one voice, and as being the ministers of one united body of Christians, how greatly would they be able to strengthen and reanimate each other, and give greater weight and effect to the Word of Life severally spoken by them. And then, instead of contending with one another in the same fields of labour, either at home or abroad—instead of being, as it were, competitors or rivals for hearers and disciples—the blessed work in which they are all engaged might be greatly and more effectually advanced, by their taking separate fields or sections of operation, or by some other well devised division of labour.

Few know how disheartening and annoying it is to many an earnest and faithful minister of Christ—how depressing it is to many a Clergyman when labouring for the spiritual welfare of the people committed to his charge, and how it embitters his life, to see his parishioners torn asunder into several religious factions. Instead of coming to their Parish Church and being one people, banded together for the glory of God, and setting their faces unitedly to discountenance vice and irreligion, they are induced to separate themselves, and join one of the numerous sects, who have set up a Chapel in the parish. Hence, from no fault of the Clergyman, the attendance at Church becomes small, and he meets with no little opposition from those who should have stood his

firm friends and supporters for the Gospel's sake; while irreligion and wickedness rear their heads more defiantly and grow apace, from want of living in harmony. And the cruel feature of the case is this, that he is represented by those who have been mainly the cause and instrument of all this, as failing in his ministry.

This is indeed a wholesale charge that is brought against the Clergy of the Church of England by the Dissenters, who are themselves the individuals chiefly guilty of effecting this estrangement from the Church, causing these divisions, and withdrawing the people from her ministrations. There are, no doubt, cases of sad spiritual destitution where, from the rapid growth of population, or the negligence of the Clergyman, vast portions of the people seem to be left as if there were no one to care for their souls. This was more particularly the case in times past, and it is true that if it had not been for some of the Dissenters, and especially the Wesleyans, who at one time were hardly recognised as Dissenters, and have only lately shewn themselves to be such, by more decidedly separating themselves and shewing their antagonism to the Church—many of the people would have been left without any religion at all. And all praise and thanks be given to them for supplying the deficiency where, either from want of means or inclination, the people had not the message of salvation delivered to them. Nor should we be slow to acknowledge this. Yet are not such places as these now the excep-

tion? In parishes where the Clergyman is most zealous, and makes strenuous endeavours to compass the work, and looks well after his charge in the care of souls committed to him, there most frequently the evils of religious strife are visible, and the opposition is the more keenly felt. The truth is, the political Dissenters do not want the Church to succeed in her sacred mission. Indeed, one of the most popular of their ministers in London, heartily wished that the Church of England was not so good as she is; for if it had been otherwise they might the more easily have effected her downfall as an establishment—an example of the bitter animosity which Dissent excites against those who would live on kindly terms with all around them, zealously serving their Lord.

It is well that some of the more thoughtful Dissenters are beginning to see how this disunion and dissension among Christian bodies is a waste of strength among themselves, and exercises a depressing influence upon their work. They are learning this by practical experience. It was lately stated in one of their publications, that on a certain Sunday afternoon, four Dissenting ministers of different denominations, left the town where they were living to hold religious services in several little chapels in a large neighbouring parish. And it was found that the number of people that came to hear them, were not, altogether, more than would have filled one of the places where they were assembled. And the writer of the religious paper suggests that some arrangement should be

made, whereby they might all labour to better purpose. It was not that any of these preachers were inefficient or wanting in zeal, but it was the result of the system, whereby Christians were divided, and had been induced to separate for worship. If they had been united, one Dissenting minister would have been sufficient for all; and there would have been a saving of unnecessary labour and expense. Besides, how depressing for a good man to have but few to come and listen to him; for he begins to think that the cause of Christ is suffering, and that there is something wanting in himself, when really it is not his fault at all.

And might not this reflection carry us a little further, to think of the Clergyman of the parish? Must not he feel sad, and depressed by the scant attendance of the people at Church, and that numbers had been drawn away to worship at other places, when the building originally set apart for the parishioners, in which he ministered, would probably have held them all, and with room to spare? And how much more edifying a spectacle it would be for all of them, if, instead of separating into small scattered congregations, the people had all been induced to come to their own parish church, and join together in multiplied numbers, as brethren in the Lord, lifting up their united voices in prayer and praise to the glory of God!

The people themselves would be benefited and incited to greater devotion, too, by the very sight of

the full Church, and in uniting with their neighbours in holy worship. The difference in the faith of these people might be very little, and would be still less if they continued to meet together, to serve the Lord with one heart and one voice; while the blessing would be great. The people in thus uniting together in the sacred service also, would feel a new spirit coming upon them, and would be the more likely to confess that God was among them of a truth. And instead of being alienated from the Christians living around them, they would be drawn towards them with the cords of divine love, and feel the influence of kindly fellowship very helpful and strengthening.

And while this visible manifestation of unity in the worship of God would, in itself, exercise a sensible influence upon the indifferent and ungodly, and those who from some cause had ceased to attend any divine service, the four Dissenting Ministers to whom allusion has been made, would—as an example of what might be done in other similar cases—be able to expend their energies and zeal to more purpose in other places more spiritually destitute, where the people needed some one to lead them to the knowledge of saving truth, and so bring hope and joy to the souls of many others, who at present are left uncared for. There is need for the help of all: there are many places, many souls, that want better looking after, more individual attention: there are many places, where vice and wickedness are

becoming rampant, and the people are suffered to go on unchecked and unreprieved, and little endeavour made to raise them to a higher level, to seek after better things; many souls living without God and without hope in the world, that might be rescued, and won for Christ. But there is yet much need of a more systematic arrangement, and endeavour to provide for those who lack the means of grace, and want some one to draw them to the love and service of God: and if there were not these hateful divisions and dissensions, some means might be devised, under some regular constitutional church government, upon some real Scriptural basis, whereby this might be largely accomplished, and Christians brought to live together in greater peace and unity.

(5.) It is to be feared, moreover, that these divisions and dissensions which are so prevalent and hurtful, do greatly affect the peace and character of the nation as a whole. The character of the people is becoming changed thereby. Instead of being a united, they are becoming a divided people. Through these multiplied separations into different communities of Christians the unity of the nation is being sadly broken up. A spirit of restlessness and dissatisfaction is being stirred up; and though the people are better off in many respects than formerly, they have become more discontented, less happy, factious, and antagonistic. Class is set against class; there is more or less a constant opposition to, and dislike of the powers that be, engendered both in Church and State.

A miserable feeling prevails among the people that they are somehow wronged by those who are above them and better off than themselves, so that even the good-will and kindness of others, and the many efforts that are made—far more extensive than formerly—and the many institutions that are raised and cheerfully supported to ameliorate and improve the condition of the people, are frequently looked upon with suspicion, or regarded as their right. Look at the thousands and thousands of pounds that have been voluntarily given for the education of their children, and the many homes and hospitals that have been provided for the sick, the suffering, and the infirm. And yet, withal, there seems to be something wrong with them, do what you will and can.

To what is this to be attributed? To better education, and more enlarged views of the nature and condition of things? No! It may be traced up, in a great degree, to political agitations; one party in the State detracting from another, and instilling feelings of distrust and opposition. But look a little more closely into the matter, carry your investigations further, beyond second causes—take a deeper insight into the nature of things, and you will find that the secret spring and the sustaining force of this discontent and opposition that exists among the people of the land, arises chiefly from the divisions and dissensions created among Christians. It is too large a subject to enter upon more fully here; but let any

one consider for a moment thoughtfully, *how* many of the questions which now agitate the public mind and disquiet the nation are fostered and upheld, and he will soon be convinced that religious differences have much to do with them, and may at times be directly traced to them; whilst they are frequently kept alive and fomented by those who have an interest in doing this.

(6.) There is, however, another serious evil which arises through the embodiment and organization of these several divisions and dissensions among Christians into corporate bodies to advocate their own peculiar views upon religion, in which they differ from others; and that is, that they more or less contribute to make the Word of God of none effect through their traditions, or dogmatic judgments, which they take up and endeavour to propagate. They may not singly do this, or mean in anywise to contribute to this end; but still what is the total result of these diverse teachings? One man affirms that he cannot find the doctrine of original sin in the Bible: another, no Atonement through the sacrifice and death of Christ; another, that Christ is not God; a fourth, that there is no distinct Person of the Holy Ghost, or that He is created, and not a Person of the Godhead at all, only an influence or afflatus; a fifth, that there is no Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead; a sixth, no Sacraments; a seventh, no Episcopal Government; an eighth, no Clergy; and so on; till in the end nearly all real truth is done

away with; for it comes to pass that most of the divine truths of the Bible are questioned by one or another; and if men listen to all that is said by the different sections, they will not know what to believe; and hence a door is opened for infidelity; for if every thing that men have been taught to believe as sacred, and plainly found in Holy Scripture, may be argued away or set aside as questionable, they may be led to think that, as there is so much doubt thrown on what is said in the Bible, or so much difficulty in ascertaining its real meaning, it is little use believing at all; or at least, that it matters little what they do believe in, or, that all beliefs are alike as to importance, which is a state of mind next to infidelity. For the very contradictions that men raise, and the knowledge that one or other meaning must be wrong, and ought not to be received, will create distrust; will lead some not to know what to believe as true. Whilst we must not forget that other most weighty fact, that men are greatly influenced, and their manner of life greatly affected by what they do believe; and that it is of the most essential moment that they are taught the real truth, the whole truth of the Bible, and nothing but the truth, as therein set forth, or can be clearly proved thereby, as necessary to salvation.

It should be observed, however, that there are several bodies of Christians, who while they differ on one or more points from the commonly received truths of the Bible, may, and do hold many, if not

most, of the essential doctrines derived therefrom; and thus far they should be accepted; and hence these several bodies may be regarded as witnesses and believers of the truths which they uphold and insist upon; but the great harm is, in their not receiving those articles of faith which they fail to believe in, and come short in proclaiming; and thus, opposing some accepted doctrine, they differ from the Faith once for all delivered to the Saints; and in this respect, and in their degree, they contribute to make the Word of God of none effect. This has been the source of infinite confusion and distraction among Christians. This has done more than anything else to obscure the truth of Scripture, and to propagate divisions. For if one party or sect think that they have a right to exercise their own judgment on what Scripture says, independently of the way in which it has been received on the whole by Christians from the beginning, others will think that they have a right to do the same; and so complications and errors spread, and doubts about the truth are multiplied.

We have given some of the more orthodox Dissenters credit for advocating and upholding in their several bodies most of the essential truths of the Gospel, and yet owing to their miserable jealousies, they in another way practically combine to make the Word of God of none effect, by willingly joining with Secularists and Infidels to uphold a system whereby the teaching of these very truths

which they separately acknowledge may be excluded from our Board Schools, where the children of the people are taught: and all schools where any definite Bible truth is taught are placed at a disadvantage, so that it is only with great difficulty they can be maintained. It is a melancholy spectacle! but it is one of the results of these religious divisions. These very professing Christians, who make so much of their little differences, prefer to have schools supported by the public rates, where it is forbidden to teach distinctly many of those divine truths which God has revealed—lest peradventure some of their favourite views, or their several positions, might be called in question—to schools where the labouring class are assured that their children may be taught some definite religion. Thus those schools which insist upon giving a religious education—which the great majority of the people wish for their children—have not fair play with the other schools. The Romish Church is, among other things, accused of discouraging the reading of the Bible by the people: and might not the members of that Church turn round upon some of these Dissenting bodies, and accuse them of obstructing, or, at least, putting an impediment in the way of teaching Bible truth to the rising generation?

And lest it should be thought that more is being made of this than need be, the words of the present Bishop of Manchester should be called to mind, for he knows well what he is saying, from his past experience in the Colonies: “Free education” which

is threatened us as a further extension of the system alluded to, he says, "means secular education—means the exclusion of the Word of God, and even all reference to God, from the schools in which we train our young. Now what is the meaning of this exclusion of religion from all part in education? It means practical Agnosticism, a far more dangerous form of that cowardly faith than theoretical Agnosticism. Not one working man in a thousand knows the meaning of the long word; but if you turn away the children's mind from God, they will certainly become, without knowing it, religious know-nothings. Now I ask you whether it is fair that Christian men should be taxed to teach their children this alien, chilling, and soul-paralysing no-faith? Are we to be taxed for the maintenance of the Agnostic sect? Are we to sacrifice, not merely our money, but the souls and bodies of our children, to this modern Molock?"

And if any attention were to be paid to the new proposition for the unity of Christians,—whereby all bodies might join in the spoil of the Church of England when it was disestablished and disendowed—that a new Church should be formed, on the basis that all the points of doctrine or practice that have been or are objected to should be eliminated and should not be preached or brought prominently forward and advocated, lest the mention of them should give offence to some of those who do not hold them,—it may well be asked, "What kind

of Christianity would this be?" Would it be Christian at all? Would it not be something else, from which the very life of the Gospel had been taken away. For if you take away the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine of the Atonement, the Divinity of Christ, the Personality of the Holy Ghost, the necessity of a Church and Ministry, the need of Sacraments, and of some definite Government for the Church,—all of which are objected to by one or other of the divisions—what would you have left, but the dead carcase of Christianity, a lifeless thing, worse than useless, a mere hideous, corrupting skeleton of religion?

(7.) Another view of the divisions and dissensions which make them so objectionable, and should lead all true Christians anxious to do away with them as much as possible, and embrace some basis of true Christian unity, is, that they are contrary to the expressed Will and Design of Christ, and tend to frustrate or mar the scheme of salvation which He has ordained. Who can read and think seriously about the words of that earnest supplication of His, a short while before He offered Himself as a Sacrifice upon the Cross for us, when He prayed for those who should hereafter believe on Him, through the word of those whom He sent to make His name known, "*that they all may be one*; as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee: *that they may be one in us*: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me;" (St. John xvii.

21)—and not perceive what little regard is paid to His sacred will and entreaty? That His heart was much set upon this; that He knew better than any man the unspeakable importance of it, and how detrimental the neglect of it would be to the future interests of His kingdom, is evident from his repeating and keeping before the throne of God, and having His Holy mind fixed upon this single grand ideal; for, Christ in continuing His prayer, said: “And the Glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them; *that they may be one*, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, *that they may be made perfect in one*; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me.” (vv. 22, 23.)

And can it be that there is any attention paid to the fulfilment of His great yearning wish, when those who profess to believe on His name separate into numerous communities or bodies, cannot worship together in one body, and will even maliciously oppose and disparage one another? Is this Christianity? Is this doing the will of the Lord? Can there be any real desire to fulfil it, while this is going on? Does it not rather appear as if they had in their religion, and zeal for their own peculiar notions and ways, forgotten, thought too little of, or altogether set aside the prominent will and entreaty of our loving Redeemer? Surely those who really love the Lord Jesus in their hearts, should think of this more seriously. All their own differences and opinions and ways are of little moment to *His will*, which

is fraught with consequences of far greater moment than any of us can conceive. And by acting in opposition to His expressed longing desire, we know not what harm we are doing to our own souls, and how much we are hindering the cause of Christ in the world around us; for, to judge from Christ's words, how can we be made perfect but *in being one*; not one in Him, separated from one another, but by being in Him united together in one Body, even His mystical body, the Church, or the one Society that He ordained for this very purpose? And how is the world likely to believe that the Father has sent Him to be the Saviour of the world, if it sees those who profess to believe on His name, disunited and quarrelling among themselves? Is it not one great cause of withholding the world from believing in Christ?

Besides, we must think of the grief it must be to our dear Lord to see this particular wish of His heart so much disregarded by those who claim to be His; the grief it must be to Him to behold His kingdom upon earth broken up and divided into so many opposing factions, that it hardly looks like a kingdom at all; because there seems to be so little rule, or order, so little organization or regard to any authority but what is severally of their own making. And instead of striving together to fulfil His will and further His work in the world as a strong, well-compacted body, what a grief it must be to Him to see one section of Christians obstructing and weakening the efforts of others, living estranged from other followers

of Christ, and withholding from them that mutual love and sympathy and support that the one should have for and of the other. What a reflection it seems to cast upon Christ, that He is not able to keep His followers in order, to work or fight together for Him against the powers of evil, and to rescue souls! He will not force them to obey or fulfil His will; it must be from love and gratitude to Him for what He has done for them, that He would have them to serve and obey Him; since nothing ought to be more powerful and constraining than this love of Christ, if it be real, and properly enlightened, to know what the will of the Lord is. It is to be feared that it is too often from ignorance, or from want of sufficient thought, or from being taken up too much with other ways of serving Him, that they are negligent or indifferent about this great matter which ought to receive their fullest attention; since, if it did, there is little doubt but that numbers of those who are now oblivious of it, or apparently unconcerned about the fulfilment of it, would do the will of God in this respect from the heart; and the more so when they considered how much may hang upon it.

(8.) There is just one more consideration, that should rouse up all faithful Christians to set their faces like a flint against all these hateful and hurtful divisions and dissensions; and it is this, that it furthers and greatly promotes the work and design of Satan. For if there is one thing more than another in which the Evil one rejoices and takes a

fiendish delight, it is, that he has been enabled in no little measure to frustrate the grand scheme and purpose of our blessed Redeemer.

For a time, as we know from Scripture, the Devil is permitted to go about, with other fallen angels, seeking whom he may devour, seeking whom he may seduce, blind, and lead into error. He has no real power over us, unless we give way, of our own selves, to some device or seduction of his. And it falls in doubtless with God's scheme, to suffer this, that He may prove the children of men in this life, to see whether they will faithfully obey him or not. God makes known His will to us. Satan endeavours to persuade us in one way or another, not to do it, to try some other way, which as he suggests would be more to our advantage. Thus in this life every man is tempted respecting his faithfulness to God and the doing of His will: and there are many ways in which Satan tries to do this: and when he cannot beguile the people of God into some wicked way, through worldly or carnal lust, he will try to set them at variance with their brethren, that he may bring discord into the family and household of God.

Satan's object is to make us fall and rebel against God; to get us to follow some evil course, or some conceit of our own, in order that he may thwart God's merciful designs in the saving of mankind. And it seems that he meets with a certain degree of success in every age. He tempted Adam and Eve in paradise with the prospect of some

delusive gain, so they disobeyed God, and fell. And whenever God opened a way for the recovery of lost man, Satan has endeavoured to hinder men from availing themselves of it, and retaining them in the bondage of corruption, estranged from God. Before the flood all flesh had become greatly corrupted; and when the Lord chose out one family, and then a people to be His inheritance, Satan, in fighting against God, tried to frustrate and bring to nought all His lovingkindness, in aiding His people through appointed means to become His faithful servants. It is so also under the Christian dispensation. And it is one of the saddest sights to see how successful the Devil is, in causing divisions and dissensions in the kingdom of Christ; setting the professed servants of Christ against each other, causing them to obstruct and weaken their several efforts to further the gospel of our common salvation; and thus hinder as far as he is able the gracious means ordained for our Redemption.

And it may be that when Satan rallies his forces—the fallen hosts of heaven—he takes them to an exceeding high place, and shewing them the disordered and disorganized state of the Redeemer's Kingdom, among all the kingdoms of the world, and the disregard that is shewn to the will and authority of Christ in keeping His people together as one body, he gladdens their sight with the success of the scheme he has devised, and the confusion he has wrought among the followers of Christ,

in which they have aided him; and he urges them onwards to renewed endeavours to stir up strife and enmity among the Lord's people. But what a mournful and terrible thing it is that he can and does secretly enlist the sons of men in his service, and makes use of them as his instruments. And the most grievous part of it is, that not a few excellent Christians are so far led astray, in their zeal for some peculiar notions and views of their own, that, without apparently knowing it, they become his chief agents in working this terrible havoc in the Kingdom of God, and of His Christ.

There are many men whom the Wicked One cannot shake in their steadfastness to Christ Himself—whom he cannot tempt to gross sins, who resolutely resist all the seductions of this wicked world and the lusts of the flesh, and make a grand stand for living a godly and upright life; it is a noble sight, and worthy of imitation; but Satan is wily enough to know that if he cannot overcome them in one way, and that openly to disobey Christ, and withdraw them from the way of righteousness, he may probably, by playing upon their zeal and religious prejudices, cause them to err, and thus lead them on ignorantly to undo or frustrate the work or design of Christ in gathering His people together in One, to fight under His banner as a united whole. Disjointed and in separate opposing divisions, after an irregular manner, these otherwise excellent men are ready to war against the powers of evil, but they will not unite in a com-

pact force and solid body, as Christ wishes them; and thus Christianity loses much of its influence and power in the world; and no wonder that it does not make more way in the conversion of souls both at home and abroad, to what might be expected, if those who profess to be followers of Christ will not become a more united people according to His holy will.

We must all, then, be on our guard, "lest," as St. Paul says—and he is speaking to Christians in general—"lest Satan should get an advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." St. Paul himself at one time, when he was persecuting the Christians, thought that he was doing God service; and, alas, there are many Christians now-a-days who think they are serving the Lord Christ by opposing and persecuting their brethren, because the former choose to think differently from them; and thus, instead of union, as Christ wills, there is open conflict in His Kingdom.

Of "those that oppose themselves," and care so little for the unity which Christ designs, we may trust that "God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil:" for it is a hideous and awful thing to find out that unawares we are doing his work; that he has been beguiling us, as he did Eve, and for the sake of some seeming good, we are doing evil, opening the door to the enemy, and helping him to work his evil purpose, and mar the design of Christ.

See we not, then, Brethren in the Lord—for as such I would address all those who sincerely love Christ and own Him as their Lord and Saviour—how many reasons there are, why all true Christians should resolutely set their faces against these reproachful and disastrous divisions and dissensions; why we should discountenance them as far as we can, or anything approaching thereto? For are they not discouraging and bewildering to many real good Christians? Are they not unseemly, and bring a great scandal upon our holy religion? Do they not retard the spread of the Gospel in all missionary efforts, both at home and abroad, to gain souls for Christ? Do they not lead to a great waste of strength and of Christian influence? Do they not sensibly affect and alter the general character of our countrymen for the worse, and greatly tend to break up the unity of the nation? Do they not tend to make the Word of God of none effect, and help to sap and undermine the foundations of our faith? More than this: Do they not serve to frustrate, to a great extent, the gracious will and design of Christ, and bring confusion into His kingdom of grace? And lastly, do we not see how these divisions and dissensions further the Devil's work in trying to mar the merciful purposes of our blessed Redeemer—to mar the power, the beauty, and blessedness of Christianity; and how Satan insnares many professed followers of our Lord to aid him in his fiendish work?

The present condition of Christianity is, then, by reason of our divisions and dissensions, most lamentable! But is there no way out of the difficulty or confusion we are in? Must we remain as we are? "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Many earnest-minded Christians want to have more real fellowship and union with one another, in the manner Christ has pointed out; and yet something withholds us: we seemingly know not how to get it. How many at this present time are yearning for all Christian bodies to be one, that there be no divisions among them; and yet, is there no light, is there none to guide us, nor any among the sons of men of sufficient weight and authority to bring us together again, to be as one "building, fitly framed together, so that we might grow unto an holy Temple in the Lord?" We sadly want some one of commanding influence to say to us all, as Joseph said to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way;" or as Moses said to some of his own people, when he saw them striving to overthrow one another, whilst in the bondage of Egypt, "Sirs, ye are Brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?" And yet if there were light sufficient, would we use it? If there be one great enough to guide us, will we listen to him? There are many Christians in distant parts of the world, making anxious inquiry whether or no some real *basis of true Christian unity* may not yet be laid down and agreed

upon, which all may join, without giving up any of the essential principles or doctrines of the Gospel, and which will be in perfect accord with the design of Christ. There are great searchings of heart. The time seems to have come, which bespeaks such an inquiry as the present, giving a hope of a nearer approach to unity, a better understanding of its foundation and principles. We must defer, however, our consideration of these points to another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

FINDING A BASIS OF UNITY.

THESE several evils to which attention has been drawn are so many reasons why Christians should endeavour to lay aside their differences, and form one compact body. Thereby Christianity would become a greater power, and have a mightier influence in the world around us. It would command more respect and attention; the civil government would not be induced to pass measures inimical to the interests of Christ's Kingdom, or listen so much to the appeals and efforts of Secularists and Agnostics, who gain no little degree of influence because one set of Christians will join them in certain measures which are damaging to other Christians, and will cripple their resources. If Christians were more united in this country, the people would be more united, and become happier, more contented, stronger, and more prosperous. But what is more, Christ's will and design for Christians would shine forth more clearly, His name would be more magnified, and His Kingdom more glorious and more fully recognised among men. While at the same time the machinations and assaults of Satan would oftener come to nought; he would not be able to frustrate the efforts in preaching the Gospel, and extending the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom, or to thwart and undo the best endeavours, the

earnest prayers, the zealous, self-denying labours of those devoted men, who live but to make Christ's salvation known unto men, and to win souls for their Lord and Saviour.

There are, then, many powerful arguments that should lead all earnest-minded Christians diligently to seek and consider whether or no there be not some basis, whereby they may all come together again and be one, as our blessed Lord desired them to be. There is much to encourage us all to do this. We should all be the greater gainers thereby, all the more happy, all the more contented, and better able and disposed to give heed to vital religion thereby, than by living in so many separate bodies. Besides, the greater part of these Christians that are so much estranged from one another have so much in common; and their several differences for the most part but little and non-essential, in comparison with the great value and importance to be obtained from Christian unity, that very many of them ought no longer to keep aloof from their brethren in the Lord, but anxiously endeavour to ascertain what terms of agreements there are which can be generally accepted, whereby we may all become one body in Christ Jesus.

Do not the Christians of most bodies own Christ as their Lord and Saviour? Do not they look to Him as the author and finisher of their salvation? Do not they for the most part confess that He is more than man, and able and willing to save them?

That He was sent by God, duly accredited and empowered? Has not God in His holy Word announced His coming to this world of ours, and the divine authority that He would have? How He would show to mankind the way of life, how to walk so as to please God, and gather together His elect in One? And when Christ came and dwelt for awhile among men, did He not claim, and what was still more, manifest His power as God? He not only taught by word, and by example also, the will of God, but ordained a way whereby those who professed to believe in Him, might become one, as the members of one family, of which He should be the ever-living Head. And that we might know the certainty of these things, did he not cause all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, that we might thereby embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life through Him, and not be led astray by the vain conceits of men, and the many divers ways that they have invented?

And do we not all for the most part agree in taking these Holy Scriptures as the Word of God—as the standard of our rule and practice in religion, and by which, whatever differences arise, we are content to abide by? And do not these Scriptures testify especially of Jesus, of what He said and did, what He appointed us to do, and how we were to live in Him and by Him? Do we not all accept these things as true, and is it not the wish of our hearts to be conformed to His guidance and injunctions? When, then, confusion and disorder prevails in every

place and in all Christian ranks—when those who should be as one have become divided into so many contending parties, or broken up into so many independent and frequently opposing bodies, to whom should we look to bring us together as one people again but to the great Captain of our salvation—to Him whom God hath given to be a Leader and Commander to the people? And whose word and instruction should we more diligently heed, above all others, than His? This is readily admitted by the majority of Christians. He did not fail us in making an all-efficient Atonement by the sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross for us. Neither can we believe that He neglected to appoint the means and the way whereby we should all be as one people, following Him in one and the same path. If, then, we accept and gladly avail ourselves of the one, we should also the more readily and obediently conform ourselves to the other—the way He points out.

Well may it be asked, then, Why should we be stricken any more? Why should we revolt more and more? Is not the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint? He alone can recover us, if it is ever to be done: He alone can bring us back to a healthier state. We have no hope in anyone else: we can have no dependence upon the prescriptions or nostrums of any other, however wise and great he may be among men. “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,” is the divine command, “for wherein is he to be accounted of?” “God hath in these last

days spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the world." It is to His words and directions we must listen; for none is ever so wise, so great, or so able as He is—none more willing to guide us back again into the way of Truth—the living way. His Word abideth for ever: it is as forcible and needful now as ever it was.

In another important manner, too, are Christians agreed together, though they have broken up in so many different contentious bodies. It is this: that they all profess to have taken service under Christ, and promised to be His faithful soldiers and servants. And when soldiers take service under their king, and swear fealty to him, are they not prepared to obey the generals he appoints, and submit to the rules and discipline, the trainings and the orders that are given by those in authority, according to the settled constitution of the Army, though they may not see the king in person? Ought not, then, all who are faithful and true Christians be prepared to fall in with the organization which proceeded from Christ in the beginning, which is agreeable to His holy will, as expressed in the Scriptures—an organization which is carried on in His name, and by the authority received from Him? We must not stickle about our own views or prejudices, or refuse obedience to the general orders and regulations of Christ's Society, or there will be nothing but confusion and disagreement, as must be apparent to all thinking men, and the very

training and discipline which is so much needed will be imperfectly performed.

It is not the right or privilege of any body of Christians to pretend that they can establish a Church or Society like that which Christ founded. The very thought is presumptuous: it is alone Christ's prerogative, which no man, or set of men, can take upon themselves; they are thereby only deceiving themselves. Nor is it the right or privilege of any body of Christians to take the Holy Scriptures and try to find out some new interpretation, or some new way of yielding obedience to them, materially different from the sense in which they were written, or contrary to the way in which those Scriptures were received by the Church as fashioned by the Apostles according to Christ's instruction. But, as the Primitive Christians received the Scriptures through the Church which the Apostles had established, in all singleness of heart, sincerely conforming themselves to the Faith, order, and regulations of that Society which they had founded, and through which they had received their Christianity and been brought into unity with Christ; so must we. It is not a blind obedience that is required of us. We have the same Scriptures as they had, and we can search them daily—nay, we are bidden to do so, that thereby we may know whether these things are so; and that nothing be required of us, as necessary to our welfare and salvation, but what is agreeable to the written Word. Only we must not abuse this blessed Word, and wrest the Scriptures from the

Church which was founded for the very purpose of guiding and training us in the way in which these Scriptures were to be taken, that we might be fitted for a future life of glory according to Christ's purpose and plan, rather than according to some man's device.

The main and original cause of our divisions, and of the utter disorganization and variance that exists, is that "we have every one turned to his own way," and think that best and right, when we should have been strictly guided by Christ, to whose word and institution we should have yielded obedience, far more than to any who profess to be His ministers, and especially when they unlawfully endeavour to attach disciples to themselves, or form a body of their own, and thereby cause a division in the body of Christ, contrary to His will and design. We have all taken Christ as our King and Saviour. He it is that should alone reign over us, to whom alone we should permanently attach ourselves, and in whose well-constituted Society we should permanently abide, as His body, as the way He has prescribed for us to walk in.

We must all admit that there is none that can for one moment ever have the commanding position and authority that He has, and whose word and design we ought more to follow and obey. There is no contention among us about this. There is none whose living rule is more likely to re-unite the shattered forces of Christendom, than that of our Lord Jesus

Christ; none to whom all sections and divisions of Christians will more readily submit, when they come to a right understanding of His will and purpose. We must all call to mind that God hath given Him "to be *the Head* over all things to the Church which is His body." And therefore His word and authority should still be acknowledged by all those who believe in Him—believe that He still lives and continues to reign over His people—and what is more should be still recognised by them as paramount to all else. St. Paul could say, "We are brought nigh by the Blood of Christ Jesus. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." (Eph. ii. 14.) And if this could be said of the Jews and Gentiles, why should it not be said of many of the Dissenters and members of the Church, between whom there is not so wide a difference as there was among them, and who having so much in common ought to be one? Christ alone is our Mediator, not only between God and man, but between good and earnest Christian people who differ: "Abolishing the enmity, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace, that He might reconcile both unto God *in one body* by the Cross."

Is there not, then, and was there not from the beginning of the Christian religion, One Being of supreme power and dignity, fully able and capable to give all necessary instructions, to devise and form a plan for the training and disciplining of all those who should hereafter claim a saving interest in Him—a

plan for keeping them all united in one body, as His flock, wherever they were scattered over the round world? And should not His word and will be still respected by all classes and divisions of Christians? None spake as He did! None knew better the purpose and design of God, none could teach better than He could how to fulfil it; for "He spake as one having authority," as One having divine power. Surely, then, His voice is still to be listened to—for it has lost none of its power by length of time—His institution and ordinances are still to be observed and strictly kept to by His faithful ones.

Christ has not left us in such ignorance as to the means whereby unity is to be preserved among His followers, as some few would make out, and left us to grope our way without light from above. Certainly we have a more sure word than that of man's to rest upon, and to be guided by, "whereunto we should do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts." Or there might be some excuse for these divisions and dissensions, which are so hurtful and disgraceful to our Christianity. What we want in these latter days is, that greater attention should be paid to the word and authority of Christ than is now paid. Our union with one another is in the Person of Christ, and our faithfulness to Him is to be witnessed, not in mere profession, or saying, "Lord, Lord," and in having preached to others, and done things in His name, but in obedience to

His will, and conformity to His plan, or by keeping ourselves steadfastly bound to that Society—the Church, which He ordained for us to abide in.

The main question, then, to be considered now is this, Is there any sure basis of true Christian unity, which all denominations may safely take, which should command their adhesion, whatever may have been the cause of their separation; which we can all work for, strive and pray for? If so, it should be more prominently brought forward, and brought to the knowledge of all true believers in Christ. If so, then have we found that which we all need so much to make us one in Christ again, and is so necessary to the welfare of Christianity. Then a panacea exists and has been discovered to heal our wounds and knit together again the bonds of our broken communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Christ. The eyes of some may be withholden from seeing it, though it may be ever so clearly set forth. But the fact that a number of Christians do not perceive it, does not prove its non-existence; and should not hinder those from receiving it and complying with it, to whom God has given an understanding heart. Not a few religious persons are so engrossed with other pious labours, or so taken up with certain religious views, that they may easily overlook and neglect some important truth or duty, which is of great moment, and should be received by them and attended to. Such a condition Holy Scripture leads us to expect of some, who seeing shall not perceive, or understand

its importance. And therefore this ignorance or even a denial of this basis should be no bar to our gladly accepting it in all obedience. For it still exists.

It is the general impression among most Christians that there should be some such basis of unity, whereby they might everywhere join together in godly communion and concord as brethren in Christ. Few can read their Bibles, but must feel convinced, that by some means or instrumentality Christians ought to agree to live together and to worship God together in loving harmony, under some divinely appointed plan, which should be recognised by all — one, that if faithfully received and acted upon, would be the means of establishing a universal brotherhood in the midst of a fallen world for all the followers of Christ. And what is more, does not the very nature and necessity of union require something of this kind, if it is to be real and lasting? It is requisite in all corporate bodies: all societies of common life that band together must have some common basis of union for which its members unite; a constitution of some kind must be formed, and rules of order laid down which all must agree to abide by. And if this is needful where religion is not in question, it is equally, if not more essential among Christians if they are to unite together as Christ would have them. There is every reason to believe, then, that some definite basis of unity was established from the very beginning of the Christian religion, and that there are evident traces and allusions to it in the Scriptures to

which we can appeal. If it had not been so, how was it possible for the Christians to be kept together, and to maintain their ground, when everything in the world seemed against them, and they had to count the loss of all things, even life itself? How is it possible that men of like infirmities with ourselves should have been so strongly bound together, and Christianity thrive so rapidly, unless there had been some well defined and well acknowledged organization and government sufficiently established and carried on among them?

The intimations and allusions, the instructions and injunctions in Scripture seem clearly to point to this state of things, if we will only closely follow its teaching, and grasp the full meaning of what is said. The bare outline of what is written as to what was uttered and done will be sufficient to enable us to grasp the fact that Christians were to be bound together by no ordinary tie; that there were certain things and measures they must accept and abide by, as the basis of their union. Not only is the expressed desire of our divine Redeemer recorded in that last great prayer which He offered, that all those who should believe in Him and look to Him for salvation *should be one, and be made perfect in one*; but we can discern that He fully purposed in His soul, to ordain and establish a settled way or means for effecting this important object, by uniting them together in one spiritual body, as a people chosen out of and distinct from the world; for He plainly intimated to His

disciples, that He designed to build a Church or found a Society, which should be known as His. And then, before our Lord's departure, He not only gave to a chosen few ample instructions as to what they were to do, but solemnly gave them a commission and divine power to begin and proceed with the work. And within this Society our Saviour plainly designed that there should be found a basis of unity for all Christians.

There may be many differences of opinion about the nature and character of the Church of Christ, but we are only concerned to take it, as it is unfolded to us in the Scriptures, and as it was founded and constituted by those to whom the Lord intrusted the building of it, for thus was it received, and none otherwise by those whom the Apostles and first Preachers of the Gospel taught and admitted to the body; and thus was it handed down to succeeding generations by those whom they especially appointed. A certain order was necessary from the beginning, and certain fundamental principles must be preserved inviolate. And herein was to be found the basis of true Christian unity, which was impressively realized by those who were admitted into the body; who by their very membership were required to conform to what was laid down by authority, and adhere steadfastly to the Society itself and its tenets.

Thus, all who would be Christians, must be baptized into Christ's name, and must formally and sincerely dedicate themselves to His service: for

Christianity is first of all, and all along, union with and attachment to a Divine Person. Then Faith in certain truths was another thing required: it was understood that they must "be obedient to the Faith," and were all exhorted "to continue in the Faith," "to contend earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered to the Saints." "They obeyed that form of doctrine that was delivered unto them," and were bidden to "hold fast the form of sound words;" so that in the days of the Apostles they must have had forms or simple creeds of what they believed. Again, when our Blessed Lord appointed His Apostles to be the founders and rulers of his Church; they were to set things in order, and give a Constitution to the Church, and then to be the first governors of it; and we find that they appointed other approved men to help them, and then eventually to succeed them in ruling over the Christians, all of whom were enjoined to "obey them that had the rule over them" in the Lord, and to "submit themselves, for they watch for your souls." They were "to know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admonish them." And St. Paul said, "If any man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."

And again we find that there were certain rules for maintaining order, and whereby the lives of Christians were to be regulated, to which every one must adhere. Let one instance suffice:—St. Paul is

urging Christians to "press forward towards the mark, for the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus;" and saying, "Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." And then he adds, "Nevertheless whereunto we have already attained, *let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*" Now these words are very expressive: since the word rule or "Canon" in the original has reference to, or is rather taken from, the *white lines* that marked out the boundary or path wherein those were to keep who engaged in the ancient races, or other gymnastic contests. If any one did not keep within the said lines, if he stepped over or out of the boundary sufficiently defined, he lost all. And so in the Christian race, while pressing forward to the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus, we must keep within the rule that has been laid down for Christians and marked out in Christ's Church. It will not do to go on our way without heeding the prescribed order, or take any course we like; for this would be to *transgress*, to go beyond the *white lines*, and so endanger our success. And this is done when we leave the body of Christ, and separate into religious factions and divisions. Whilst we, then, keep the end or the prize in view, let us also at the same time be careful to "walk by the same rule." And though some are more advanced than others, let us all still "mind the same thing," the faith and unity which we have in that Society which

Christ has ordained for his faithful people. "So run," the Apostle saith, "that ye may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." But in another place, the Apostle says, "Yet is he not crowned unless he strive lawfully," *i.e.*, according to the rules laid down. And so a Christian, if he would gain his crown, must conform himself to Christ's design, and continue a faithful member of His Church. And there is the greater hope of this by keeping to the course marked out, than by any advance or religious profession in an irregular manner, by stepping beyond the white lines of unity and obedience, contrary to Christ's known will and design.

Then especially again was it regarded as the bounden duty of every one who continued in the unity of Christ's Church, regularly to receive the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, according to the Lord's injunction, "Do this in remembrance of me," so that they might continually keep up their personal union with Him, and depend upon Him for fresh supplies of grace through this sacred ordinance. And finally, they were to worship God in company with the members of the same one body, in all places and neighbourhoods where they lived. Indeed, in one short verse it is clear that the very earliest Christians of all, recognised a basis of unity which they were to abide by, when it is said of them, that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread,

and in the prayers." (Acts ii. 42). Here we have the nucleus, or principle lines on which Christian unity was maintained; and which, though further extended and more fully explained and set forth, shows the beginning of that basis of unity which must still be continued among Christians, at least among those who would be one body in Christ, as He ordained.

Of course this will become all the plainer, and be the more convincing when we come to examine more at length the Scripture records in detail, and learn how the Primitive Christians held together in *the* one body or Society which Christ founded, into which they had been received. But the brief outline which has been given is sufficient to prove that Christians could only enjoy the blessings of unity by continuing in that sacred inclosure to which they had been admitted, and conforming to the constitution and principles laid down for their adhesion. The unity which Christ designed for His followers, then, was something more than merely a tie of mutual affection and esteem. That we should "love our neighbours as ourselves," it has been observed, is indeed one great distinguishing precept of revealed religion: and where true unity is preserved, the obligations of this precept will doubtless be most strongly felt. But the law which binds us generally to do good to all, even to our enemies, must not be mistaken for that special bond of union which connects us as Christian brethren.

We may cherish of sentiments of good-will towards persons, whose opinions and conduct in religious

matters we think to be wrong, and which we feel bound in conscience to oppose: but they that would be one with each other, as Christ Jesus is one with His Father, must be "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment;" nay, more, they must "walk by the same rule," and "speak the same thing." Scriptural unity, in the true sense of the term, is the best preservative of Christian benevolence; and will be much more likely to lead us to "live in peace" than when men differ and separate on religious points. But though the tendency of Christian unity is to foster peace and Christian benevolence, yet is the one by no means identical with the other: and they who make that tie, by which Christians should be united as Christ designed them to be, to consist wholly in mutual kindness, forbearance, and good-will, greatly mistake its nature, and have a misconception of the true principles of Church membership.

Neither does this Scriptural unity consist in a number of Christians combining independently together, and separating to worship God after some form or views of their own; for, however zealous they may be, whatever degree of unity they may have among themselves, and however they may incite each other to fervent devotion and good works, and exhibit some of the best features of the Christian Life; these combinations do not come up to the unity which Christ desires for His true followers. Indeed they are essentially antagonistic to it, and their tendency is to

overthrow that unity which our Lord would establish among His people, whereby they might all be one in Him. For it is through these independent combinations and separations, that these very divisions and contentions arise which are so disgraceful and hurtful to Christianity. If we are to obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are to avoid making or joining any other combinations or Societies of Christians, and cleave only to the one He has Himself founded, so as to bind all Christians together in one and the same body, wherever they may be. This is evidently Christ's design; so that His people are not to live loosely by themselves, or in combination with others independently of Christ's body, as if they could be Christians by themselves simply; they are not to find out new ways, and become disjoined and different from that one Society which was established by Christ and His Apostles in the beginning; which was to come down even to us; and which is still among us, though bearing upon it the marks of many a struggle and conflict. There must only be one body of Christians who are to be truly united. And no other organization should be recognised as forming a basis of Christian unity than that which has the sanction or authority of the Head of the Church, and can be traced up to Him as historically the same.

Nor on the other hand must we so conceive of Christian unity that it does not still allow of differences of opinion on some matters. It does not require us to see all things alike, or even act altogether alike,

so long as we keep to the one body or Society, and hold the fundamentals of Christianity, as set forth in Scripture, and were accounted as essential by the Church in its earlier, purer, and more united days; when it could speak with one voice as it were: so long as we keep within these bounds there is ample liberty, so that all things be done to edification and the preservation of peace and unity. Though the truth can admit of but one right interpretation; still as men's minds are constituted, and as all have not the same opportunities of information, or the same abilities, and see many things differently from others, there are matters of inferior moment, subjects about which there is some obscurity, as, for example, the millennium, and predestination, and therefore hard to be understood; respecting which the wayfaring man may err, and the learned differ, without a breach of Christian unity. Nay, as it has been said, though such difficult questions should give rise to protracted discussions, nevertheless the study and investigation thus incited will tend to further the cause of truth: and provided the bounds of moderation be not overpassed neither the peace or unity of the Church will be disturbed thereby. And in this view we are confirmed by St. Paul, who though severely reproofing and condemning those who caused divisions and dissensions, or who were not obedient to the Faith, left such matters as the eating of meats and the observance of particular days, to the private conscience of individuals: but still taking care to observe even

matters of lesser moment when enjoined by those in authority, as, for example, that women should not appear in the assemblies of the Christians with their heads uncovered; and the further setting of the things in order, which had not been previously settled.

In Christian unity, however, there must be some points in which all members must agree; some things which all will hold in common; and which render them essentially and evidently one, though composed of different individuals, situated in different places, and existing at different times. The special characteristics which form the basis of this unity are briefly these, as in some measure set forth in the outline drawn from Scripture.

First, we must be members of *the* body or corporate Society which Christ founded: for it is positively asserted that, "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid." Wherever we be, that part of the Church to which we belong must be similar to, and on the same lines as the foundation the Apostles laid. For we believe that the plan of the divine Architect is uniform, and that His Church wherever it is builded according to his directions, will present the same appearance, and have the same essential order and characteristics.

Secondly, the Faith as delivered by the Apostles to the early Christians must be acknowledged by us, in its integrity. We must not attempt either to invent new articles of faith which neither the Apostles delivered, nor the ancient Church propounded or

sanctioned; nor on the other hand refuse to believe in or live by any of those articles which are founded on Scripture truth, and were accepted as such by the Church of old.

Thirdly, we must hold by the same kind of government in the Church as Christ evidently designed. His will must be our law in this respect, as well as in other matters. And the Scriptures of the New Testament distinctly show us, that He did not leave the rule and control of the body in the hands of one man; nor yet in the hands of all its members, nor even of all who should minister therein, for He gave the commission to a few chosen disciples, His Apostles, who were to be chiefs in His Church, and who evidently continued and handed down the same kind of government. Therefore we must not have anything to do with any other kind of government than this, which in every place can also be orderly traced up to the Apostles.

Fourthly, we must hold fast by one and the same Constitution which the Apostles in other respects established as of perpetual obligation—such things as are needful for the building up of the Church and the maintenance of its order and unity; as, for example, the threefold order of ministers by whom the work is to be carried on; the due and faithful administration of the Sacraments appointed by Christ Himself; the assembling of ourselves together for Divine worship after the settled form; and one and all, the Laity as well as the Clergy, submitting to the

rules and discipline duly authorized for the well-being and order of the community generally.

Now these particulars are put prominently forward as the basis of a true Christian unity, because they lead us most plainly, and as directly as possible, to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose, as revealed to us in the Word of God. They are emphatically pointed out as the legitimate deductions or outcome of our Saviour's design in building His Church; and without which there could be little likelihood that the great desire of His heart could, in any marked degree, be fulfilled. For it is only in so far as this basis of unity is respected and adhered to by Christians, that it can reasonably be expected that they will become one people, as Christ would have them to be. These several points are specially noticed because they are embedded in the Scriptures, and form an integral part of the very structure of the New Testament, by which all denominations of Christians profess that they desire to be guided.

Happily, as it has been remarked, there are many points which we all are willing to accept and abide by. We are all agreed as to the general principles of living—"soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" we all admit the necessity of abiding by truth and honesty, love to God and man, and purity of life. And a great part of the religion we all have consists in giving heed to the precepts and promises respecting these, and the warnings and threatenings contained in Holy Scripture. We have no need to differ and dispute

about these. Then how many denominations of Christians there are separated from their brethren in Christ who hold alike most of the chief doctrines of our holy Faith. We might choose out six or more of the leading dissenting bodies, who nearly all believe and hold the same divine truths; and in many of them, where the differences might be easily met or overcome, if there were a greater disposition to fall in with the Lord's strongly expressed desire. Considering also the other points, already alluded to, in which the generality of those who separate are agreed, it makes these divisions and dissensions which so largely abound in the Christian world, all the more sinful and wrong. The fact, however, that we have so much in common, is nevertheless a matter of rejoicing and of hopefulness, since it ought to draw all such closer together, and effectually incline them to become one people in the Lord.

What we have to inquire about and to ask for are "the old paths," which the Apostles, and those who immediately succeeded them, laid down, and are well enough to be discovered in the New Testament, and to "walk therein;" to bring out to view a too much neglected aspect of the Scriptures, viz., the will and design of Christ as to how Christians should live and walk together in every place by the same rule, as brethren in the Lord. We have to insist upon some few truths of the Bible which seem to have been overlooked; some which, though interwoven in the texture of the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles, are

in some degree still unheeded, and seem to have been dropped out by some, or been purposely omitted in the reading of the Bible. And especially should we set clearly before our faces those rules or canons, which like *white lines* have been defined and sufficiently marked out for us to be guided by, and are specially to be noticed for the maintenance of unity among the followers of Christ wherever they dwell.

We take, therefore, the Scriptures, which we all admit as the standard of truth, to inquire about these important matters. We take, in its truest and fullest sense, "The Bible and the Bible only," as our authority. Not, of course, any kind of interpretation men may give to its words, to suit their own preconceived views, but the one definite sense in which they were given and received at the first. For we hold that they were designed to convey *one meaning only*, and to be taken in that sense only, and not in another, which would give a meaning that was not intended. And if we appeal to the writings of the Primitive Christians—as we hereafter purpose to do—it is not to find out some new signification, which the sacred writers never desired to convey, but to ascertain how they understood the words of Christ and His Apostles at the beginning, and what reference they had to the Church which was founded among them. We look to the writings of the Primitive Christians, then, to learn how they regarded the Church of Christ but lately established by those very individuals whom Christ commissioned, and through whom also the Scriptures were chiefly given, to which we all

appeal, that we may the more clearly perceive how Christians are to be united together as *one* people according to Christ's will.

We hold that the same Word of God, which we all read, has a definite meaning *now*, and the same as at the beginning, respecting the truth we are seeking after; and that it can be well understood, and readily perceived by sincere searchers after it. But since Christians will differ as to the meaning of some parts of the Bible, and more particularly as to the nature of Church government whereby the unity of Christians is largely to be secured, we must take the best means within our reach to get its accurate sense—to find out what Christ and His Apostles wished us to do, and in what light we were to understand their words. And the best and surest interpretation of them that is known, are the actions and writings of those in the days immediately succeeding the Apostles, of those who carried on the self-same work, and had been taught and directed by them. For it is only reasonable to suppose that they strictly adhered to the lines the Apostles had laid down; and that in their writings, and the descriptions they give, they truly told us how they understood the Word of God, at first spoken to them and then written; and how the Church of Christ was to be viewed in correspondence with it. Nor can we for one moment imagine that the works of the Apostles in planting the Church, were at all at variance with the words of Scripture which they wrote.

The Scriptures are certainly not to be held responsible for the many heresies and schisms which have arisen, any more than the currency of good coin is accountable for what is counterfeit. For the multiplication of dissensions and divisions among Christians have no sanction from the Word of God, but are really forbidden as contrary to the will of Christ. It is no doubt owing to the perversity of the human will and conceit, where the ingenuity of man is exercised in finding out something new and different to what has been generally received, and attracting attention to it, and to himself, that is at the root of so much evil. And the only sure way of greatly preventing and lessening it, is to go to the real meaning of Scripture with regard to the Church, which Christ founded through His Apostles, so that the very tenor and spirit of God's word may be more accurately known, and more closely adhered to by all; since it is perfectly suffused with the teaching and principle of unity throughout.

Nor let any one think that it is a matter of minor importance about which Christians may feel that they may agree to differ: for it is no such thing. The proper building and construction of His Church, was a matter about which our Saviour was greatly concerned. It was the next thing of greatest moment to that of our Blessed Redeemer making an atonement for us on the Cross. It was evidently regarded by Himself as the next most important business of His life whilst on earth; and accordingly we find Him

most anxious to make preparations, and to give the necessary directions and powers for the building of it. And one of the great objects of His doing this, about which His soul was straitened till it was accomplished, as shown in that great intercessory prayer for His people, was, that by its means "they might be one." He well knew the dangers to which His Church would be exposed, how men from various motives would disregard it, and think lightly of it, and find out other ways of religion for themselves; He well knew how the great enemy of God and man would try, not only to overthrow the Church, but, when he found that this could not be done, to hinder its unity, and thwart the desire of Christ in every possible way.

Christ tells us that He came "to do the will of Him that sent Him." And if this was the case in His laying down His Life for us, it was also to fulfil the will of His Father that He planned and gave much thought as to how He should build His Church on earth, so as to unite His elect in one visible body; since from the allusion to it in the Old Testament, it appears to have been decreed in the counsels of Eternity. The design of Christ to found His Church for the purpose of gathering together His people into one body, was not for the first time evolved from His mind in the days of His taking upon Him our flesh. It had long before been the will and design of God, and was foretold in ancient prophecy; and Christ came to carry out the will of His Father, in setting up His Church or Kingdom on the earth, as well

as in teaching men how to live so as to please God, and by dying for their salvation.

Notice how Daniel speaks of this. "In the days of these Kings, (that is before the ancient monarchies should have entirely passed away) shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people." (ii. 44.) Not only is the fact revealed to us, but the time in which the founding of Christ's Church shall be accomplished. And again Daniel shews us how it was further revealed to him. "I saw in the night visions," he says, "and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him, dominion, and glory, and a *Kingdom*, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which should not pass away, and His Kingdom shall not be destroyed." (vii. 13, 14.) In this Christ's Church will differ essentially from the Kingdoms of the world; it shall not like them be destroyed and pass away.

Then the founding of Christ's Church or Kingdom is foretold by Isaiah, when he says; "And it shall come to pass in the last days (by which term the Christian dispensation is often alluded to;) that the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above all the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." (ii. 2.) There is something peculiarly and especially

note-worthy in these words. "The mountain of the Lord's House," is understood by commentators to mean the Church of Christ, of which the Temple at Jerusalem was a type—a type also of unity, "whither all the tribes of the Lord" went up to worship, "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." For the Lord had promised to place His name there, and blessing for evermore. But now observe, that in the new dispensation, the mountain of the Lord's House was not confined to Jerusalem, nor to one people alone—the Jews; for it "shall be established on the top of the mountains"—the plural number is now used: it—*i.e.*, the House of the Lord—for it is still one—shall occupy all the chief places of the earth: "and shall be exalted above all the hills; meaning that it shall every where have a dignity and honour, above all other associations or Kingdoms of the world. "And all nations shall flow into it." And as it is expressed in another place, "The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto Thee," and again, "the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and Kings to the brightness of Thy rising. Lift up Thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to Thee; Thy sons shall come from far and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side . . . the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee."

But in continuing the former portion of Scripture, how expressive are the words that follow: "And *many people* shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of

the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us of His ways." The Church of Christ is, then, to be universal for all nations : and there shall be such a powerful and attractive influence, that the people of far distant kingdoms shall "flow" or flock "unto it;" shall press forward with strong desire, with progressive steps, and in constant succession one after the other, until they are received into its bosom, and become sons and daughters. From the picture presented to our view by the Prophet, they seem to encourage one another, as persons usually do who are exceedingly interested in any enterprise, and are very solicitous that their friends and neighbours should join them in what they expect to enjoy. For they rightly judge that in joining Christ's Church a blessing of far greater worth is to be obtained than they can justly estimate. But mark the expressed object of their pursuit, and what they hope to gain : it is none other than that the Lord Himself, the mighty God, may be their Teacher, and not only show them the true way of Life, but lead them therein. And this would be done, not only by the direct personal teaching of Christ, but by the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, which would be given to those who truly desired to be guided in the blessed way. This is what they long for, and what they feel assured would bring them peace to the satisfying of their souls.

And then notice the happy effect of this, a glad and ready acquiescence : "And we will walk in His

paths." There is a willing and resolute obedience to His instructions : no desire still to follow their own ways, even in the doing of what He tells them, no appearance of quarrelling among themselves, or finding out different ways : for to them there is but one way, and that is, the one way in all points which the Lord designed for them, and would plainly enough set before them to walk in.

The very place, too, where a beginning of this glorious work will be made is mentioned, and the means of accomplishing it : "for," continues the prophet, foreseeing what would happen, "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." By "the law," and "the word of the Lord," not only do we understand the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel in general, as published by Christ and His Apostles, but the founding of Christ's Church in particular, and the directions and ordinances by which it was to be carried on and perpetuated, as one compact body everywhere. The fulfilment of this prophecy is amply corroborated in the New Testament Scriptures ; and is shown, not only in the instructions which Christ specially gave to His Apostles, but in their strict compliance with His word. To these points we purpose hereafter to draw particular attention.

The study of this subject is very interesting, and might engage our attention much longer, for there are many passages bearing upon it ; such as "the Lord, whom ye seek shall suddenly come to

His temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in." (Mal. iii. 1.) "I will shake all nations, and *the Desire of all nations* shall come: and I will fill *this house* with glory, saith the Lord The glory of *this latter house* shall be greater than the former," &c. (Hag. ii. 7, 9.) But that we may be brief, our remarks shall be confined to one other passage; which brings out another feature respecting Christ's Church, to which our attention should be given.

After speaking of the influence of Christ's reign upon men, Isaiah, the Evangelical Prophet, as he is called, goes on to say: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse that shall stand for *an ensign* of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious." (Is. xi. 10.). And then in the twelfth verse, speaking of what the Lord would do, he again says, "And He shall set up *an ensign* for the nations." Now what are we to understand by this expression, "an ensign," which is so emphatically repeated? Has it not an obvious reference to the ancient practice of princes or commanders, who in times of eminent danger, ordered standards or banners to be erected on the tops of the mountains and high places, that the inhabitants of the country, and especially the sworn soldiers, might be assembled with the utmost expedition to receive the instructions of their sovereign or commander, and to perform the service in which he thought proper to employ them? Now this Scripture

plainly intimates that Christ has been appointed as our King and Commander; and that He Himself shall be our ensign; and that wherever His banner is set up conspicuously, as on the top of a mountain, thither shall the people of the Lord resort from all quarters, as to a centre of unity, so that they may enjoy intimate fellowship with Him and with one another.

To Him shall be the gathering of the people, as it is elsewhere said, that He may make them glad with the light of His countenance; that He may be their stronghold, that they may enter His service, and be His people; that they may receive directions from Him, as to their training and movements, through the various officers duly appointed according to the constitution He has inaugurated and ordained; that they may be one, and fight as one army under His banner, wherever they be; and come off more than conquerors through Him, who is thus the Great Captain of their Salvation.

This *ensign* is set up for all nations, "to it shall the Gentiles seek;" so that it speaks of a time when the Church of God would no longer be limited to the Jews, but be enlarged, so that "all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God," and become partakers of it. But is it not further obvious, that to erect other ensigns that He has not sanctioned, for gathering His people together in separated companies, thereby dividing them into contending factions, is of itself a rebellious act, and must be fraught

with evil consequences, in as much as it would set aside the great object of *the ensign*, that is, to gather them together everywhere into *one body*, that there may be no disorder and dissension; but that all His people may be united in Him, and under Him; and in their union become strong to fight the Lord's battle? The ensign of the Lord Himself ought to be enough, to enjoin us, that in all places, the rendezvous for His people must be one, and not many, since there is but one Lord, and His banner is everywhere the same; but bearing in mind also *the very purpose* of the ensign, it should convince His people in all places of His dominion, that nothing should be done to distract their minds, nothing to divert them from being united in one body.

Nevertheless, how little attention is paid to this important matter in these days; still, let us not like some unbelievers of old time, think that God doth not see it, neither doth the God of Jacob regard it: for it is still sin in His sight, and if persevered in, will in time bring down God's judgment. The mention of the envy of Ephraim in the very next verse to that in which the ensign of the Lord is mentioned, brings to mind the awful end of Ephraim—under which term the ten tribes are alluded to—when they separated from Judah. Their separation led to idolatry and wickedness; they existed as a Kingdom with varying fortunes for about two hundred and fifty years; and then, as the Psalmist has it, “the Lord awaked, as one out of sleep.” “For they grieved

Him with their hill-altars; and provoked Him to displeasure with their images." "When God heard this, He was wroth; and took sore displeasure at Israel So He delivered their power into captivity and their beauty into the enemies hand. He gave His people over also to the sword." For their national depravity was great, and they had sunk deeper into idolatry. The end of all this was, that they became extinct as a nation, while Judah was restored as a people.

Now Isaiah had but lately witnessed the terrible judgment that had befallen Ephraim. And as if conscious that some kind of separation or defection from the ensign of the Lord would happen in the spiritual Israel, to her hurt and shame, though the falling away would be not of that heinous nature as happened to Israel of old; he notwithstanding seems to gather hope, and in prophetic vision to foretell a time of reunion, and that happier relations will be brought about between those who from various causes have been separated, when peace shall be restored, and the Lord's people shall be one again, according to His earnest prayer. When "the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." (Isaiah xi. 13.) This is an encouraging and memorable event to look forward to, and labour for, and pray for. The learned Bishop Louth observes, "This part of the chapter contains a prophecy which certainly remains yet to be accom-

plished, and shall in due time receive its full completion." And one means that will greatly contribute to this, is to consider most diligently how the founding of Christ's Church is connected with the revelation of His word and design, as set forth in the New Testament; and to remember that what Christ did and said with respect to it, was in the fulfilment of His Father's will.

Now it must be obvious to all who will candidly think the matter over, that the Church should be in strict agreement with the Scriptures. Nor ought we to seek for any other basis of agreement for the unity of Christians than that which has been laid down and accepted of old as most agreeable to those Scriptures. It is not too much to say, nor is it going beyond the limits of truth to say, that a sure and definite basis of unity for Christians was first laid down by Christ and His Apostles, before any word of the New Testament Scriptures were written. Indeed, it can be well ascertained that the several books of this sacred volume were the outcome of that bond of union and fellowship that had been established; and that they emanated from some of those who framed its constitution. The Church, as a distinct and visible body, was the channel through which God gave us the Scriptures. The Church was the witness of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, its guardian and distributor. And on the other hand, these Divine Scriptures assure us of the Divine origin and authority of the Christian Church; and that it was designed

by Christ, that, settled and constituted by His Apostles, it should form the basis of all true Christian unity. So that the one mutually upholds and strengthens the other. We rightly look upon that Divine Word as a whole, and as coming to us from God. But how did it come? The books were not all written at once, nor by one man: it did not come as a whole at first, and as if it had dropped down from heaven in its complete form. But holy men of old, authorised messengers of God, "wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost." Hence we are assured "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God."

But let us try to grasp the fact as to how it was thus given to man, and in what order it came, and what was the direct object of its thus coming at the beginning. If we endeavour to gain an intelligent view of the matter, it will greatly help to solve the difficulty of many minds that think so differently, and make the path we ought all to take more clear before our face. Bear in mind, then, that before the Gospels or the other books of the New Testament were given to us, the Christian Church was first founded by the express direction of Christ. A model of what it should be was first begun at Jerusalem; a visible body of Christians was there formed by the Apostles, closely united together by the most sacred bonds, so that they formed a compact body or Society, apart from both Jew and Gentile. The Apostles acted under the direction and authority of Christ their Lord, and they kept together in one

college as the heads of the new Society until they had completed a pattern of what it was everywhere to be like ; giving to it a constitution by which they were to work and abide, and which was to be observed throughout all generations.

And then they separated and went forth into different parts of the world, to preach the Gospel to every creature ; and uniting their converts to Christ in Holy Baptism, they thus added them to the Church, to one and the same body of Christians as the Lord commanded them. The nature of their mission would prevent the Apostles from continuing in any one place, or consulting together beyond a certain time. They must go from country to country, and from city to city, as St. Paul did, carrying everywhere the glad tidings of salvation ; and in those places where the numbers of the disciples increased, and were found to remain steadfast, the Apostle who had gone forth into that region, gave them a minister whom he had ordained, subject to himself, or rather to the ruling body in the Church, to watch over the Christians, and teach them to keep and observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them. Nor did these Apostles think their work complete in any place until they had planted the Church in its integrity, after the pattern they had provided in the Mother Church of Jerusalem. They themselves took the superintendence and rule of the Churches they had planted, and of the ministers they had ordained, so long as they were able ; but

when the time came that they saw they could not longer do this efficiently, they called others to their help in ruling the Churches, and eventually gave them an independent rule, in a definite sphere, as their successors to the authority Christ had given them. These points will be entered into more fully afterwards.

Then it was, too, that the Scriptures of the New Testament began to be written. The Apostles were desirous that those communities of Christians, whom they were compelled to leave, should possess a copy of the Gospel, which they had preached unto them, that they might have certain information in their possession about the Life and Words and the Mission of their Divine Saviour, and of the Church which He had designed for them, constantly to refer to. We have four Gospels, but they are to be regarded as one: they are the divers accounts of the one Life and Words of our Divine Lord, as given from different points of view. They did not all originate in the same way; and though probably there were many other accounts or fragments of the Life of Christ written, yet is there no certain information, nor was there need, that all the Apostles should write a Gospel. Some were written, as we are told, at the request of certain of the Churches that had been formed. St. Matthew is said to have written his Gospel for the Hebrew, or Jewish Christians. St. Luke for the Gentile Christians. St. Mark is reckoned to have written St. Peter's Gospel of Christ; while St. Luke's

was mainly from St. Paul's Gospel; for this Apostle making use of this expression, "according to my Gospel," shows that he had one also, though we have none extant that goes by his name. And yet St. Luke's Gospel was to a certain degree a compilation from several accounts then written by eye-witnesses and Ministers of the Word, as he himself states in a short preface to his Gospel.

St. John, who lived long after the other Apostles had gone to their rest, and had, it is thought, seen the other three Gospels, added many other facts, not to be found in the other three. Thus several miracles of our Lord are recorded by him alone, as the turning water into wine at Cana, and the healing of the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda: and while he entirely omits to mention any one of the Parables of our Lord found in the other three, he gives us two others, of which they give no account. Besides, St. John entered more into the spiritual character of our Lord's teaching, and unfolded more of the Divine nature of our Saviour's Being, while the other three Evangelists keep more to His life as man, through which evidences of His Divine power are nevertheless visible. Mark the contrast in the beginning of St. John's Gospel alone, to that in which the other three commence theirs.

St. Luke, also, in his Acts of the Apostles, gives us a most valuable historical account of the first planting of the Church of Christ, commencing at Jerusalem, and then in other parts of the world,

which of itself is a proof that the Christian Church of which it speaks, and which became instinct with life by the coming of the Holy Ghost, was antecedent to this portion of the Scriptures, from which we learn so much of its character and fortunes. But deeply interesting and important as the book of the Acts of the Apostles is, so far as it goes, it was necessarily fragmentary, as we shall hereafter see.

The Epistles of St. Paul, and those of some of the other Apostles, were called forth in various ways, as the necessities of divers Churches required; and were written chiefly in regard to the faith, the rules and ordinances to be observed, and the character and behaviour of those who had been admitted into Christ's Church; and to impress upon them their responsibilities as well as their blessings.

And besides the Revelation of St. John, which completes the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament, there were several other writings of the same period extant; but those which we now have were mostly read, and generally held as inspired by God, in the early Churches of the saints, while the others were not. Hence, then, during the period which is generally known as that of Primitive Christianity, it was settled by the Church what books should be definitely regarded as the Canon of Holy Scripture, and which should not be. There was some little dispute or demur about one or two, but the question respecting them was eventually set at rest, so much so that in the generations immediately succeeding, and in all the

early Councils of the Church, and down to the present time, the whole volume of the New Testament, as we now have it, was generally received, and is now by Christians of all denominations without the least hesitation. All these points are well known to the student of biblical literature.

But very desirable and valuable as the researches into the origin of the sacred Scriptures are, the contents of the inspired books are infinitely more valuable, and should be received with profound respect, and have our serious attention. And the point to which our particular attention is drawn, and which should be brought out more clearly to our view in furthering the subject under our consideration is this—that the basis of true Christian unity is everywhere throughout the Scriptures constantly alluded to. The union of Christians in one body or Society, as a distinct and separate people in the world, is continually borne witness to. Since it existed among them, and various events arose calling for the interference or remark of the authorized rulers of the body, it must necessarily not unfrequently be referred to, and insisted upon. Hence we find so many warnings and exhortations about Christians keeping to the one body; and the worth and necessity of it, not only for individual members, but for the whole body, so repeatedly brought to our notice.

No one is accounted a Christian until he is received, or grafted into the body of Christ's Church, after a definite form of admission, enjoined by

Christ Himself. No one is suffered to continue in this sacred bond of fellowship and brotherhood, if he disgraces his holy profession by evil living; nor unless he holds the faith as received in the Church, and preached by the Apostles. No one is allowed to remain in the Society or body, if he wilfully absents himself from the assembling together of the brethren for holy worship, and especially if he will not come to the Holy Sacrament when he is bidden. No one is properly accounted a member who refuses to conform himself to the rules and constitution of the Society, or perversely disobeys the rulers or appointed officers, to whom he is subject.

And hence, it comes to pass, that we have already in the Scriptures—which we all accept as our standard of truth, and our rule for being Christians—a sure and definite basis of true unity: one designed by Christ Himself, not only for the great advantage of individuals, but for the general welfare of all, and to increase the glory, and mightiness, and extension of His Kingdom among men. And not only shall we be able to assure ourselves of such a solid and enduring basis of true Christian unity by searching the Scripture diligently to see whether it is so or no; but we shall thereby have ample means and opportunity for knowing *what* that unity is, and how it is to be maintained and observed by all who would be loyal to Jesus. In short, if we are ever to find that basis which we need, and which so many really earnest

Christians are looking and asking for, it must be in comprehending, fully realising, and abiding by that which the Word of God has revealed to all men, and as proceeding from, and authorized by Christ Himself at the first in founding His Church.

CHAPTER III.

AN AWAKENED DESIRE FOR UNITY.

THERE are several matters that must now be taken up, to which some allusion has been made in passing, but which call for fuller consideration. It is no wonder that the subject which we are inquiring about is occupying more than usually the attention of the religious world. So dissatisfied are a number of the more earnest-minded with the Divisions and Dissensions that are prevalent at present among Christian bodies, that an awakening desire for unity is beginning to manifest itself on all sides. It is not only showing itself among Church-people, but among the Nonconformists; it is not only making itself heard here in England, but in distant parts of the world,—in America, Australia and South Africa. The distracted state of Christendom weighs deeply upon the hearts of many; for they cannot but see and acknowledge how contrary it is to the very spirit of Christianity; and they are becoming more sensitively alive to the fact, that this separation among Christians is very detrimental to the cause of vital religion; that it is not only hurtful and depressing to individual souls, but tends to injure and retard the spread of the Gospel and the extension of Christ's Kingdom. They are, therefore, anxious that some effort should be made to put an end to this state of things, or be curtailed as much as

possible; that a better understanding should be promoted among all sections; and an endeavour be made to find some common platform or basis upon which they may all stand, and be as one united people; having a degree liberty of differing within certain bounds: not insisting upon a too strict conformity, but at the same time stoutly upholding and adhering to certain essential or fundamental principles inherent in Christianity, and such as have come down to us from Christ and His Apostles, and can be witnessed in the earlier ages of the Church.

Hence, within the last two or three years, the subject of Christian unity has largely come to the front. It is not only that special references have been made to it on various occasions, and that individuals have urged it upon our notice in their addresses; but that large bodies of leading Christians have, in their assemblies, given great attention and consideration to it. It has been seriously discussed by the foremost ministers of the Gospel, by those well qualified to speak upon the matter. And a short review of what has been said at some of these deliberations, or in certain cases which have given special prominence to the subject, will help us in no small degree to see the position in which this momentous question now stands. Such a brief review will reveal to us two or three things. First, that there is still in many cases a great difference held in the idea of unity. For some think that it can be maintained without any regard to the common

principles by which alone it can be preserved in national or social life. Neither does there appear to be any general understanding as to the means by which this Christian unity is to be restored.

But secondly, notwithstanding the differences that still exist, and the variety of sentiments that are expressed, there is this agreement, that most of those who have taken the matter up, are strenuously opposed to the strifes and divisions so rife among Christians; and all earnestly yearn for a larger return of some kind of Christian unity. And this is our great ground for encouragement and hope, that something real, permanent, and effective may yet be eventually accomplished. We must never expect all men to be of one mind on religious matters. This is beyond our expectation. But it will be a great end attained, and will tend to compass what is so anxiously desired, if it leads to a better understanding of the Gospel scheme of Christian unity, as the Primitive Christians received it from Christ and His Apostles.

Then thirdly, this consideration will lead us to perceive the necessity of giving more thorough attention to the subject than it has lately had—that a more thorough inquiry into it should be made—a going back to the fountain-head, to ascertain how the stream of new life infused into many souls was at the first one and undivided, as it flowed forth and onwards; how the grace of union with Christ kept the Church as one body; how it was preserved as one for many

generations, notwithstanding the tremendous obstacles that opposed it, not only in the bitter persecutions the Christians had to pass through, but in the attempts made to corrupt their faith, and to cause division among them, as it is now with us. This newly awakened desire for unity which has extended to the further corners of the earth, appears also to be something more than a mere wave of thought that has spread itself to other nations, and will shortly expend itself; it is rather like the incoming of the tide, a higher wave following the last, which is to bring us the full sea. It seems like the sign of a higher power moving the hearts of a faithful few, in divers places, to seek after a fuller and more real accomplishment of our Lord's will.

Still the subject is not altogether new. The thoughts of not a few have for a long time been turned towards it, and have been anxiously striving for it. About thirty years ago, before this fresh impulse was felt, some manifestations of the longing for unity set in. Near this time "The Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christendom" was formed in England, having members belonging to the Anglican, Roman, Oriental, and American branches of the Church. And every day since then, it is stated, their appointed prayer for Unity has been said by their increasing thousands of members. Its object is a blessed and glorious one! Nor is it vague in its terms and proposals for compassing it, which in substance is, that all the old Apostolic Churches

should accept and abide by the definitions of faith, and the rules and Constitution of the Church, as set forth by the first four or six undisputed general Councils. This however, would entail a renunciation of all those corrupt additions to the faith which were not sanctioned by those Councils, and all those arbitrary measures which trespass upon the independence of National Churches, which ought not to be, so long as they faithfully keep to the decrees then generally accepted by all. And yet, since the formation of this Association, the decrees of the Church of Rome made in the Vatican Council, were in open defiance of its principles; and there is less hope than ever that they will help forward or join in furthering the Unity of Christendom; but will the rather obstruct the very object of the Association, which some of this community have joined, and try to render it nugatory.

Many other organisations have been formed in various places, all looking to the same great end. "The Evangelical Alliance," which has branches in various parts of the Continent, acted at first rather on the principle that one denomination was as good as another, so long as they accepted a few leading articles of faith, without considering it essential that any visible form of unity so desired by Christ should be attempted. The Alliance has, it is said, of late years, boldly given expression to two great facts. First, That the Protestant sects are sick at heart of their own sectarianism; and secondly, That they have

spontaneously reached the true conclusion, that Unity requires them to cease urging upon others their own sectarian peculiarities, leading them to fall back upon those great principles of action in which all Christians are, or ought to be one. The multiplied secessions and disputes among the various sects have, undoubtedly, led to these views.

More recently "The Home Reunion Society" has sprung up among us, whose object is, "to present the Church of England in a conciliatory attitude towards those who regard themselves as outside her pale, so as to lead towards the corporate Reunion of all Christians holding the doctrines of the Ever Blessed Trinity, and the Incarnation and Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Society, though it cannot support any scheme of comprehension, compromising the three Creeds, or the Episcopal Constitution of the Church, will be prepared to advocate all reasonable liberty in matters not contravening the Church's Faith, Order, or Discipline." The laudable desire being, to engage Christians to pray more constantly and fervently for Unity; to open the means of communication between those who are now separated; and to remove any impediments that stand in the way of Nonconformists, and prevent them having union with the Church. Of course, on both sides, nothing must be done contrary to the essential principles of Christian unity; which require to be better understood.

The formation of "The Young Men's Christian Association," which has met with no little success in various places, not only in England, but abroad, is another powerful evidence of the same irrepressible longing for Unity. It may not be all that may be desired, since it tends rather to confirm the principle of divisions, persuading each individual to keep to his own separated communion; though it insists upon everyone avoiding those disputed points, which cause so much dissension; still it plainly recognises the numerous sectarian divisions as an intolerable hindrance to the advancement of vital Christianity, which must be strengthened by agreement in religious views, and brotherly communion.

But to come to the events and utterances of the last two or three years: it would take up too much space, and weary the reader to give even a tithe of what has been said and done to shew the yearning which exists for greater Christian Unity, not only in the Church, but among Nonconformist bodies; for the subject has occupied the attention and interest of very many. A whole volume might alone be filled with what has been said in the several Convocations, Congresses, and Diocesan Conferences; and separately in the discourses and addresses by Bishops, and leading Clergymen and Laymen. But it will be sufficient for our purpose to take a few prominent and representative instances from both sides, so as to enable us to gain a general and perspicuous view of the whole question,

which is as yet somewhat diverse and unsettled; and thereby the better to form some definite opinions for our guidance.

In selecting an example to shew the state of feeling in the Church of England, and how the case stands between her and the Nonconformist bodies, attention is drawn to the published correspondence which lately took place between the Bishop of Winchester and the Rev. Canon Wilberforce, of Southampton. The latter represents a number of those persons in the Church who greatly esteem the work and lives of many who are separated from them, and are anxious to draw them closer to us in fraternal love and fellowship. This feeling greatly prevails, but the question is, How is this to be done? and, What steps should be taken to effect it? Now the Reverend Canon had established kindly relations with the Nonconformist ministers of the town wherein he exercised his ministry, and had repeatedly met them in friendly intercourse; and they, on their part, had responded so far that they had come to his Church and partaken with him of the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood: and, in return, he had ventured to preach on a certain Sunday evening in one of their Chapels; thinking that this would be the best way to solve the question, and restore the unity of Christians for which Christ had pleaded so earnestly in His prayer.

Others, however, who were quite as willing to acknowledge the great services of the Nonconformists, and equally desirous of cultivating a kindly feeling

towards them, thought that he had overstepped the rule or canon of unity prescribed, and entered upon one inconsistent with the principles of any abiding rule, as well as different in its nature to what Christ had designed. The Bishop of the Diocese was rightly appealed to, who felt it his duty to write to the Canon, and put before him what he considered to be the right view of the matter, and how he should act for the future. It was a very delicate task, but one of bounden duty, and could not have been in better hands. For the Bishop of Winchester is generally acknowledged as one of our ablest theologians, and one who has thoroughly studied the question he had to deal with, as well as the writings of the Primitive Christians relative to it, and the course they took in following the will and ordinances of Christ and His Apostles. He wrote in a fatherly way, as became a Bishop, and it is evident that his words had been well weighed over, and should, therefore, the more commend themselves to our notice, as bearing upon the Rule of the Church in this important matter.

The Bishop says:—"I desire most earnestly a better understanding and ultimate union with the principal Nonconformists. I gladly acknowledge the piety and zeal of many of them, and believe that they are labouring, as we are, to stem the torrent of vice and unbelief, and to bring Christ home to the homes and hearts of men. But this need not lead us to disregard and repudiate what has been held to be the peculiar glory of the Church of our fathers. There are certain

principles of the English Church which she has held almost throughout her history, and which, but for her would have been probably lost sight of in the world. One is, that the Church of Christ, not only an invisible spiritual company, but the visible living organism, is a gift of God, and has lived on in an unbroken continuity from the days of our Lord's bodily presence to this day. So the Church is from above, not from beneath; and it is not possible for a single man, or body of men, in recent times to constitute a new Church at their own pleasure. Another is that, though the Church is divine, it has yet human elements, and so may require pruning—prudent and careful pruning—if it runs into excessive or unhealthy growth.

“Unless these two principles are true, the Church of England is indefensible; her very *raison d'être* is gone. The Church as one with the Church of the New Testament and the primitive ages; the Church as reformed (when corrupted) on the exact model of the primitive body; these two are the pillars on which she rests. To give these up is to give up all, for if they are not sound the Church of England cannot be defended, either (1) for having separated herself from communion with the Roman Patriarch, or (2) for not simply taking her stand as one of a number of Protestant sects.

“Some thoughtful and pious men, not members of our own communion, have admitted, and still do admit, the great importance of our position in these respects, and the hopefulness of that position for bringing into

union some of the disjointed members of Christ." Having thus laid down the position which the Church of England holds, and the sacred principles by which she must guide her actions; the Bishop shows the danger of ignoring these principles, acting contrary to them, or infringing upon them so as practically to set them on one side—which our most fervent charity, or admiration for the zeal or piety of other men, should never lead us to do—and continues:—"Now to ignore this, to break down all boundaries, to acknowledge that we are but one of a multitude of heterogeneous communities of human origin, is to deprive us of our vantage ground, and the world of the hope which springs from our occupying such vantage ground. If we and all the other Christian bodies in England, are to be described as alike 'Churches of different denominations,' then we are the most schismatical body in the world, assuming a position to which we have no right, unless we are, indeed, the ancient Church of the nation come down in a continuous stream from the fountain head. To concede this is to concede everything which is worth living for and worth dying for.

"I am very willing to admit that great men like Cardinal Newman and Cardinal Manning are also devout and holy men, though I deplore their defection from the Church of their forefathers. I am equally willing to admit the excellence of many Protestant Dissenters among us. I wish all blessing to their work where and so far as it is for God. But surely

I am not, therefore, bound to repudiate principles which are to me dearer than life, and to break down boundaries which are calculated to preserve us from the imminent danger of losing all distinctive doctrines and degenerating into mere schools of philosophy. I can quite understand persons who have already diluted Christianity with philosophy being ready to break down all the fences of the Church and to make a wilderness and call it peace. But your standpoint is utterly different from theirs, and I cannot quite understand your hold of your Church ministry with all its vows and undertakings, and yet your indifference to the best and truest interests of the Church, and, as I believe, of the faith and truth of Christ; for though the lampstand is not the lamp, the candlestick is not the candle, yet the lamp or candle is hidden and lost if that on which it is to be held up for light is broken or spoilt."

It is not needful to give the whole of the Canon's lengthy reply, the gist of it is contained in these words:—"For myself I have constantly and publicly declared, both in print and by word of mouth, that my eager desire for spiritual fellowship with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ does not imply for a moment that I see no room for preference between the Church of England and the Christian sects around her. I have never hesitated to declare that I know of no organisation calling itself a Church to compare with the Church of England. For fidelity to primitive Christianity, for freedom from the possible tyranny of

Congregationalism on the one hand and the despotism of Papacy on the other, for broadness of view and wide tolerance, for faithfulness to the 'whole counsel of God' for 'rightly dividing the word of truth,' for witnessing to all the sides of the many-sided revelation of God, I am of opinion that her equal cannot be found. As a living limb of the majestic vine of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, with the strong pulses of spiritual life beating through her whole frame, if she be but true to herself, and at the same time courageous, expansive, liberal, and tolerant, she may be the rallying ground of Christendom in days of disintegration and peril. I do not desire to tamper with one of her grand traditions; I would not lower her standard of dogmatic teaching one jot or tittle; I would not sacrifice one syllable of the sacred deposit of the truth committed to her under any specious cry for external unity, even if by so doing I could entice every Nonconformist in England into her noble communion, for the truth is not ours, but God's. Nevertheless I am constrained to believe that there is a bond of spiritual union which far overreaches and transcends the boundaries of the Church of England, and that thousands who are descended from those who in days gone by conscientiously separated from the Church of England, though they are not in communion externally with us, are yet built into that spiritual fabric of which Christ is the chief cornerstone, which is the Holy Catholic Church, and cannot therefore be stigmatised as heretics and avoided as lepers."

While, then, in one part he speaks as a true and loyal son of the Church, he still thinks that the Nonconformists should in some way be recognised as part of the Holy Catholic Church; and that we are only serving "the best and truest interests of the Church of England . . . by the removal of any disabilities," which now stand in the way to more intimate union.

The Bishop in due time returns an answer, and begins as follows:—"I rejoice to find that in so many points we agree, and that you feel so much attachment to the Church of our fathers and believe it to be the best and purest of all Christian communions. I myself should add that it is the one existing institution which, humanly speaking, gives any hope of the reunion of Christians in one spirit and one body, and that, therefore, its careful preservation from corruption, waste, and decay is of the deepest value on every Christian and charitable principle."

And after a space he continues:—"You know perfectly well that I never speak of Dissenters as heretics, that I never doubt the union to Christ or the spiritual life of pious Dissenters. Of course, I believe that a person baptised into Christ, awakened to his privileges as a child of God, and living a spirit-baptised life is in a state of salvation, whether he be Churchman or Nonconformist. Of course, I believe if the Lord Jesus Christ were to return to-morrow (and for his speedy return we constantly hope and pray) that He would

find multitudes of Nonconformist Christians ready for His coming, and would call them to Himself to 'meet Him in the air;' while multitudes of the members of the National Church could only expect to hear the words 'Depart from Me.'

"But this, if it proves anything, proves too much. I have no doubt—I think that you have no doubt—but that in that great day, many, many devout Roman Catholics will rise to meet Christ in the air, and so will ever be with the Lord. I cannot conceive that men like your own uncle or Cardinal Newman, even though they left a purer for a more corrupt communion, will be rejected at the last.

"Does this prove that a clergyman of the English Church (if it were possible that he should be permitted) would be justified in officiating in a Roman church either by preaching, or celebrating Mass, or the like?

"Further than this, I do not doubt that, according to the teaching of our Lord and St. Paul, many of those who never heard of Christ will yet be saved by the mighty power of His Incarnation and Atonement and Resurrection. Your argument might be extended so as to prove that therefore a Christian clergyman might officiate in a Mahomedan mosque or a Buddhist temple."

The words of the Bishop are so valuable to help us to form a right judgment upon this important question, that a few more of his sentences must be given:—"I am at least as earnestly longing for union among Christians as you can be. During a ministry

of more than half a century this has been my great aim and hope. I am President of two societies which have been formed for this very purpose. But then I am deeply convinced that nothing in this world can so endlessly and hopelessly retard such union as the breaking down of all landmarks and substituting a hollow truce for a true and comprehensive unity. I sympathise with the professed object of the Evangelical Alliance; but its action is to substitute 'alliance' of independent bodies, some of them most unevangelical, for the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ.

"My chief objection to Dissent is not to the doctrines or discipline of any particular sect, but that its very principle is to ignore the unity of the Church of Christ, inventing a thing unknown to Scripture and the primitive Christians, of a spiritual, invisible community only, and instead of the one Body of Christ, substituting a multitude of disunited and disconnected sects. All that tends to confirm and perpetuate this theory is a direct countermove to the prayer of our Blessed Lord that His Church might be one as a united witness to the world. (John xvii. 21.) What I did say and mean is that Christ's Church is a divine ordinance, come down to us direct from God; that it was not a society formed by man; and that there is confusion in saying that if a man or a body of men desire to institute a new sect they thereby can constitute a new Church. If any one can prove to me that the Church of England so came into existence at the Reformation, I will resign my

bishopric and retire from her communion at once. It is not uncharitable to maintain that which God has given us. I believe the worst of all want of charity would be so to throw down bulwarks and landmarks as to confuse all present Churches and sects; so inevitably ere long losing all vital doctrine and substituting for the Catholic Church (one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic) an invertebrate, inorganic collection of persons and sects and creeds of every colour and shape and size. It would be impossible for the large mollusc ever to grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. But I may hold the theory of Dissenters to be untenable and their organisation defective, and may refuse to acknowledge it as sound and sufficient, without any unkindness or disrespect for them. An eminent, pious, and learned minister of the Free Kirk of Scotland was once staying with me at Ely. After days of discussion I said to him, 'We are so agreed in all points of doctrine, even on the Sacraments, that I can see nothing to divide us except our difference as to Episcopacy.' His answer was, 'Even that need not long stand in the way, but for the present we cannot unite; we must work on for God on our own distinct line, hoping for the time when He shall bring us closer together.' This appeared to me to be true wisdom and true charity. I have written all this at great length, because I am anxious that you should see that there is another side to the question, beside that which seems to you so clear."

The Canon, while gratefully acknowledging the Bishop's second letter, enters upon a further explanation of his conduct, and says, "Nevertheless, as the question at issue is so important, and is so manifestly pressing forward for consideration and decision in the Church of England, I ask permission to disentangle my position from some irrelevant issues, in which I think it has become involved." There is no need pursuing his observations, which serve as an excuse for the line of action which he had taken; sufficient, that at the close of his letter, he promises as a true son of the Church, "loyally and unhesitatingly to obey" his Bishop. This was not, however, the end of the question.

The matter was considered of so great moment, that in the next Convocation of the Southern Province, the following *Articulus Cleri* was adopted by the Lower House, and sent up to the Bishops for consideration:—"That whereas certain priests of the Church of England have preached, by invitation of those who are not in communion with the Church, in places in which its doctrine and its discipline are avowedly opposed, we, the clergy, while duly acknowledging the charitable motives and intentions of those who accept the invitations referred to, desire to express our belief that the acceptance of such invitations is not only contrary to the principles and laws of the Church, but tends to hinder rather than promote the unity of Christian people. This House respectfully requests their lordships the Bishops to take such steps as may

be in their power to prohibit and suppress this innovation, which is a great scandal in the eyes of many devout Church-people, and is detrimental to the spread of true religion."

When the *Articulus Cleri* came before the Bishops (May, 1887) the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol supported the statements; and while intimating that it called upon them to give a clear and firm decision, in their "united wisdom," he trusted that no words would go forth from them that would tend to break up "those peaceful relations which we are most desirous to maintain with our brethren of Nonconformity."

The Bishop of Winchester having been so lately intimately concerned in the question, and being one of the leading Bishops, said that "they were very much indebted to his Right Rev. Brother for the kindly and considerate way in which he had spoken, and for asking them to take up a firm position." And then observes, among other things, that he does not think "the question is primarily a legal one, but rather a question of Church Order, with which we can deal, as Bishops, independently, to a certain extent, of the Law Courts. Of course, Church Order and the law of the land are mixed up intimately. Except through the law of the land the Bishops have no coercive jurisdiction. Still, I think this is not so much a question of law as of Church Order, and I venture to think that preaching or taking part in the religious worship of those not in communion with our own

Church is against all primitive practice, against all Catholic usage. But it is also, I think, especially against the principles of our own Reformation. I need not refer to primitive customs, because we are all aware that in the early Church it was not the custom for Presbyters to take part in the services of those divided from their communion. I should rather like to speak of the Reformation, because the Reformation is, to a certain extent, appealed to as having justified every kind of division."

Now, the observations of this sage and learned Bishop—made after mature reflection—are considered so judicious, and as throwing much light upon the position held by the Church, that what he says on the present occasion may well be here repeated, not only for the benefit of Church-people, but for all classes of Dissenters, so that there may be a better understanding for the future.

Continuing his remarks, the Bishop says:—"The Reformation, I hold, did not mean what many people think. It did not mean the right of private judgment. It did not mean the Bible only as the religion of Protestants, though all this may have followed on it. As I understand it, it meant this:—The Church had been suffering for a long time from intolerable oppression and tyranny, and that oppression and tyranny was not only galling in itself, but it imperilled the truth of religion and the faith of our people. There were additions, accretions to the truth which were so serious that it was extremely difficult for people to

live in the true faith of Jesus Christ while they were under the supreme dominion of the Bishop of Rome. There was, therefore, a very urgent need that the Church should be reformed. There was a great desire on the part of the people in many portions of Europe to reform the Church, but all the efforts to reform were choked by the Roman *Curia*. So the oppression and corruption of the Church having become intolerable, as all European Christendom could not unite to throw off the yoke of the supremacy, English Christendom thought it right to do so. They thought it was a necessity to do so, and accordingly English Christendom—our English Church—threw off the tyranny of the supremacy of the Church of Rome, which was a tremendous tyranny, and also a source of corruption in the faith, and reformed herself on the principles of the primitive Church. And on the principles of the primitive Church I maintain she did reform herself—not as has been stated of late on the principles of the fourth or fifth centuries—though that was the primitive Church, too—but the principles of the first and second centuries. She maintained Ignatian Episcopacy. She maintained the same doctrines of the Sacrament as we find in Ignatius, in Justin Martyr, in Irenæus, in Tertullian. It was, therefore, a true reformation of the national faith on primitive lines. If the whole of Europe had reformed England would not have acted alone. But failing this, the nation and the Church as a great unity rose up and reformed itself. Unless there had been a dire necessity

for such a reform I, for one, hold that it would have been a terrible sin. I do not think that can be too strongly laid down. If the reform had not been called for by the direst necessity, it would have been one of the most terrible sins ever committed by man. But England held—the English Church held—and we, I think, as Bishops of the English Church, hold, that there was a tremendous necessity, and that, therefore, the Church was justified in reforming herself upon primitive models. She did so reform herself, and it was a great national movement of a great national Church.”

Having thus set forth the position held by the Church of England, the Bishop of Winchester goes on to speak of that held by those who have separated from her communion:—“Now I have the greatest respect for Dissenters, or Nonconformists, as they prefer to call themselves now; but the very principle of Dissent is a denial of the principle of the English Reformation. I have laid down, I think, the principle of the Reformation. It was a great nation and a great Church reforming itself, when it was impossible to get the whole of Christendom to reform itself. But the Dissenters have a totally different principle—namely, that for very slight differences of opinion you may separate from a great national Church, and that any body of men that like may set up a new Church of their own. That, I say, is in direct antagonism to the principles of the English Reformation. So it seems to me that any who belong to the Church of England

—the great Catholic Church of this country, the great Church of the English Reformation—are altogether inconsistent, and to a certain extent rebels against the principles of the Reformation if they join in public worship with Nonconformists. Once more I say I have not the slightest feeling of ill-will towards Nonconformists. There are many devoted and good men among them. But I think they are distinctly mistaken. I think their principle a direct counter-move to the Reformation; and so I think we are not justified in ignoring the distinction between the National Church and the various Dissenting bodies. It is not the case, as has been stated in newspapers and the like, that this is a question of Apostolical succession, or a question of Episcopacy. These are things which I am quite willing to enter into in their proper place. But if there were no such questions as Apostolic succession, or the Apostolicity of Episcopacy, still all I have said would be true—namely, that the entire National Church reformed itself, and that the breaking up into any number of sects is antagonistic to the great principle of the English Reformation. Thus it seems to me, however well intentioned the clergy may be who wish to join in public worship in the chapels of our Nonconformist brethren, the doing so is untrue to the principles of the English Reformation. The ignoring of all this, and the treating of every modern sect as on the same footing as the great ancient Church reformed at the Reformation is simply confusion. . . . Again, I have the strongest possible feeling of desire

for closer union with all Christians. I desire to the utmost to see that. It is the longing of my heart, and, I believe, the longing of all our hearts. But then the question is entirely whether this breaking down of all the old landmarks, and doing away with all distinctions and ignoring all old principles, is the likely way to effect such union. It might produce a temporary truce, but never a permanent peace. But, differing from the principle of those who, instead of trying to untie the knot of disunion, are prepared to cut it, I still think our best way is to act by suasion and kindness."

He then proposed the following Resolution:—“In the opinion of this House it is contrary to the principles of the Catholic Church, as maintained at the English Reformation, that Clergymen should take part in the public religious services of those who are not in full communion with the Church of England, and that it is desirable that the Bishops should use their authority and influence to induce the clergy of their respective dioceses to abstain from such practices. Nevertheless, this House deeply sympathises with the desire to bring all Christians to closer communion with each other through union with the Great Head of the Church, and recognises the fact that there are many ways of maintaining kindly intercourse with Nonconformists which are not open to reasonable objection.”

This was seconded by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, and carried unanimously.

For two or three reasons, then, there need not be much regret at the irregular action of Canon Wilberforce, for no little good has eventually come out of it. First, it drew forth, as we have just seen, from the Bishops in Council a unanimous decision as to the future conduct of the Clergy with regard to their intercourse with those who had left the Church; debarring them for valid reasons from joining them in their worship, or preaching in their assemblies, whilst still urging them to maintain kindly relations with them, and a certain degree of fellowship as owning the same Lord and Saviour, and preaching much the same faith. And the remarks which were made by our reverend Fathers in God, which were evidently approved by them all, help us the better to understand our position as Churchmen—and upon what a different foundation we rest to what other bodies of Christians do.

Secondly, the action of the Reverend Canon manifested what a deep feeling of regard there now is among many in the Church for those who had nevertheless withdrawn from her communion, and the earnest desire to embrace those who manifestly loved the Lord Jesus in warmer fellowship and brotherly sympathy, as far as it were possible; so much so that he was determined to take a bold step, and go beyond the canon of the Church, or the limit of order to which he had bound himself. And though others keep within it, it should be well understood that there is a growing and enlarging desire in the

Church of kindly feeling towards those pious Christians who have dissented from her; unless they show by some antagonistic action, that they have evil will at Zion; like some of those who of old cried out in their blind fanaticism, "down with her, down with her, even to the ground."

Thirdly, it has brought to light a warmer regard and esteem for the Church that exists among many of those who have left her communion, and that there is growing up among the better minded, and the more earnest Christians among them, a greater yearning for a return to fellowship—for some more visible manifestation of union, as most agreeable to the will of our Divine Redeemer. And this feeling will, it is trusted, increase the more, when they perceive and understand the love and tender affection which the Church of England still has for those devout souls that are without her fold; nor will they be so much aggrieved with her, when they understand the principles upon which she acts, and the position which she feels bound to maintain. It is said, "the mother never dies," nor does the mother ever forget, or cease to have a yearning after those who have gone forth from the home, and become for a time estranged from her, or have taken offence at something. The mother, however much she warmly embraces and loves the children that abide by her, however she is occupied with her daily work, still thinks of those who have gone away from her side and home, and longs to see them come home again

that she may embrace them once more. This is the feeling which to a large extent pervades the Church of England toward Dissenters.

Nor must they forget that the Church of England feels bound on principle to maintain a certain position among them, which she cannot forego, however desirous she may be of opening out her arms to them, and exercising fraternal affection and esteem. She feels that she cannot be unfaithful to her sacred trust: she cannot lay aside her high calling, which by the will and providence of God she holds in this land, as the mother body of all Christians: as the centre for all true Christian unity; as the only likely means and channel through which it can alone eventually be brought about again. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church." And she feels responsible to Him, not to encourage or give countenance to any action that has a tendency to set at nought, or to break up the unity which He has designed, and is so anxious that it should be maintained. She feels bound to keep on the ancient home that was left to her, to keep it intact, and to enlarge and extend it for all the requirements and increase of those who come to her. She must also ever keep the door of the home open for those that are wishful to return, and desire to enjoy her ancient fellowship, derived from the Apostles. She often blames herself, lest by her harsh words or actions in times past she may have driven some from her home; and she is all the more careful now that no

reproachful word should come forth from her; so that those who are separated from her may be all the more sure that her arms will be ready to receive them, and that a warm welcome awaits their return.

Since writing the above, the subject of the Home Reunion of Christians was brought before the Lower House of the Southern Convocation (March, 1888), when a very animated discussion took place, which drew forth some very valuable remarks, all designed to open the way to bring about some better understanding, if not some kind of organisation for the union of those earnest souls who are severed from the Church. Some difference arose as to whether it would be desirable to have a standing Committee duly authorised to consider, watch, and facilitate the movement or no. And eventually the following resolution was agreed to:—

“That in view of the growing feeling of the serious and far-reaching evils of disunion among Christians, His Grace the President be respectfully requested to direct the appointment of a Committee of this House to consider, and from time to time to report on, the relations between the Church and those who in this country are alienated from her communion: and generally to make any suggestions as to the means which might tend by God’s blessing to the furtherance of the Reunion of all among our countrymen who hold the essentials of the Christian Faith.” May some good come of this!

Space will not allow us to bring forward other examples of the desire for real unity on the part of the Church of England. It is however of some moment to shew, that there is a reciprocation of this feeling among many pious and earnest-minded Dissenters, and that the question is being taken up, though without any relation to organic union with the Church, at present, but with the purpose of establishing a more kindly intercourse, and a better understanding. Something of this feeling was exhibited by the Nonconformist Ministers when they assembled together at Canon Wilberforce's Church to receive the Holy Communion at his hands. It was markedly expressed also at the Wolverhampton Church Congress (Oct., 1887), when the Nonconformist Ministers of that town in a body addressed the Right Reverend the President and other Members, in the following concise terms:—

“We, the ministers of the Congregational, Baptist, Wesleyan Methodists, Methodist New Connexion, Primitive Methodists, and Welsh Churches of Wolverhampton, desire respectfully to join the inhabitants generally in offering you a welcome to our town on the occasion of your great annual gathering.

“Your Church holds a distinguished position in this town, and we are glad to record the co-operation in works of public beneficence which has existed between many of your communion and ours. We are thankful to share in the heritage of your Church, in its wealth of devotion, learning, and eloquence.

“We follow your missionaries at home and abroad with our prayers, and rejoice in every success of their labours.

“Your scholars and divines are an inspiration to us, as we trust ours are not without value to you.

“Your books are in continual use by us, and whilst we cannot always accept the teaching of all your teachers, we trust we are not slow to value much that may be found in them all.

“In what we deem the essential elements of Christian character and living we perceive a far closer approximation to one another than our differences of interpretation and of Church practice would seem to show. This has perhaps its most frequent and beautiful expression both in the Psalms we sing in common and in the hymns we have contributed to each other, in which we recognise the common facts of our Christian religion, and the universal emotions of a spiritual life.

“The increasing activity and success of your community as an organisation for the spread of religion and virtue among the people we observe with feelings of admiration and joy. The intemperance, unthrift, evil speech, gambling, unchastity, and religious indifference prevailing to so great an extent in our land are awakening among you, as we trust also throughout the Christian world, an enthusiasm of Christ and of humanity which God will honour with complete and happy triumph.

“We are persuaded that your immense resources, as well as our own, cannot be devoted more acceptably to God than in the pursuit of these practical and elevating aims. As workers in this husbandry of our Lord we heartily wish you yet greater success.

“We hope that your brief visit to this industrial centre will afford you pleasant recollections, and that your discussions will eminently promote the cause of religion in our land, and that grace, mercy, and peace may abide with you always.”

Then follow the names of eighteen ministers and the several denominations to which they belong. Much the same thing happened at the Leicester Church Congress, when the members were welcomed by the Nonconformist ministers in the name of the Lord; who in turn were warmly received by the Bishop of Peterborough, who addressed them in words of brotherly kindness. Thus, then, the Nonconformist ministers in several places manifest the great respect they have for the mother from whom they are separated, and there seems to be also a lingering affection for the old home still, if not directly a desire to return to that centre of unity of which the Church of England is the representative and exponent.

But how is the question taken up among themselves? It is well to come at this, that their real feelings towards the Church and the prospect of unity may be ascertained, and understood. And the following instance will afford us a good example. At a meeting of the Congregational Union in London (June 1886) the

Chairman—who was afterwards called upon to address a meeting of the Baptist Union—in speaking to his brother ministers, seemed to catch a glimpse of what might lead, if followed out, to a greater degree of Christian unity than is exhibited at the present, inasmuch as it points to the terms on which there is a chance of coming to a real understanding upon the great question: for, alluding to “the spiritual men in the Church of England, with a view to better relations, *when* Disestablishment arrives,” he said: “It is not modern Congregationalism which we expect them to accept in the block, but *the Primitive Catholic independency, and local self-government of the Churches of the first Century.*” Why, this is the very key to the whole question; it is *the basis of unity*, which the Church of England is willing to take, and would invite both the Roman Communions on the one side, and all the Nonconformist bodies on the other side, to take up also, and so come to a mutual understanding, for a general union of all Christian bodies. And indeed this is the very line of argument and research that we design to undertake in this Inquiry.

But if it be right to take “the Primitive Catholic Independency and local self-government of the Churches of the first Century” as the standard of unity, whereby all Christians should order themselves, why *wait* till the Church be Disestablished, and thrown down to the ground? For if it be right, why make this a condition before you accept it? Why not embrace it unreservedly, and make a beginning of

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acting upon the principle pointed out as the right way, without any further delay? The ruin of the Church in her temporalities will not make the course easier, or more right, than it is now. And if those ministers, whom this Chairman addressed, would diligently search out in what this standard of unity consisted, without being influenced by any preconceived bias or mere sectarian views, and honestly agree to abide by the plain truth of Scripture testimony, and the witness of history, then there might be some hope of a return to real unity.

And he it remarked that this basis of unity which he pointed out, as the right meeting ground on which all Christians should take their stand, seems to run on in the Chairman's mind, notwithstanding the conflicting sentiments that evidently warp his judgment: for again towards the close of his address, he says: "We are not quite satisfied with our sectional Societies, and long for closer union with the great and good men of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, who abound in all Communion. *But that general union can be attained only through a common return to the Ecclesiastical life of the first two Centuries.*" Yes! we would emphasize this statement; and call more general attention to this very point, or rather, basis of unity. For the Chairman has here got hold of the right thread to disentangle, and put straight the confused and perplexing state of the Christian world.

He is keenly alive to the harm that is done to the cause of Christ from the prevalence of schism

and discord among Christians, for he said: "What is injuring the cause of free Christianity is, this most detestable and unnecessary rivalry that is setting up so many distinct little causes, with remarkable few effects;" and declared: "that they were ruining the free Churches of England in many a district by contentions and differences which ought never to exist at all." But what hope can there be of any real union of Christians, so long as each of these separate bodies make their several differences, which have caused them to separate, and been the reason of disunion, a standard of right and wrong, instead of accepting an authorized standard which can be common to all?

Singularly enough, he speaks in most enthusiastic terms of the Church of England, and seems transported with what he hears and sees and knows about her: he observes, that "a gale of divinest harmony" arises "from the ten thousand organs of Cathedral Choirs, College foundations, and Parish Churches accompanying the voices of white-robed choristers, or chosen singers of the congregation, to words which stir all hearts, as they oftentimes recall the adorations, and re-echo the prayers of ancient Christendom. Through all these Churches rises the voice of the same Liturgy, consecrated by the sweetest and noblest associations of the past, enshrining the essential truths of Christianity in the matchless language of the Tudors, and enfolding all humanity in the breadth of its Catholic intercessions, and lifting up the soul to God by its simple and antique sublimity . . . The masses

of the people are attached to their Church, largely on account of its Scriptural Protestantism." And he remembers "that the ancient Church of England translated, distributed, and caused to be daily read in the Churches the sacred Scriptures, the fountains of pure Christianity." With other like words: and so carried away, does he seem to be, with the excellence of the Church in this country, that it might be expected that some one or more of the ministers present would have exclaimed, "Almost thou persuadest me to become a member of the Church." He himself evidently longs to enter her Communion: but yet he stands without. Is it that he hopes to bring the Church of England down to her knees, and then effect a forcible entrance? We trust no such an unworthy motive will be suffered to stand in the way.

Later on, in the same year, the representatives of all denominations were asked by some leading political Dissenters to meet in the City Temple, a Nonconformist Chapel, to discuss the question, "Is a State Church compatible with true Christian unity?" As might be expected, no satisfactory conclusion was come to, for it was an equivocal question; and was rather aiming a blow at the Church, in a side way, by bringing forward a subject of the highest moment, and insinuating that owing to the position held by the Church in relation to the State it was impossible to have union with her. The much larger and really more important question, which would have gone to the root of the matter should have been: "What is

it that really hinders true Christian Unity?" Which is the subject uppermost in the minds of many; and *from which*, the former question seemed calculated to withdraw attention.

And not a few leading preachers among the Nonconformists have given expression to a yearning for an altered state of things, and a larger unity than at the present exists among them. There is a touching instance of this in the remark made by the late Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown, a celebrated Baptist Minister, towards the close of his life—a remark which is much in favour of having an endowed Ministry: "If I had a nice moderate income from independent sources, nothing would please me more, and really, I think, be better for me, than to become more and more a teacher of the working classes in Liverpool. Better this than to be simply the servant of a capricious congregation. I do long for a broader life than the Baptist or any other Ministry affords. *God send it, and that soon!*" And there are many in their own hearts that would breathe forth the same sentiments!

But with all this desire for greater unity manifested by some of the Nonconformists, which it is pleasing to notice, it would be conveying a wrong impression if we did not notice the darker side of the question, and confess with sorrow, that there is still a bitter and hostile antagonism manifested towards the Church by a large section of those, who are chiefly known as the political Dissenters, who are

actively labouring to pull down the Church; so that matters are yet far from ripe to make any definite proposals for a reunion of Christians, though this awakening desire for it will doubtless lead to more diligent inquiry as to the right basis upon which alone it can be reached. At the same time it must be observed that those Christians who are displaying so much animosity against the Church, are far from being at peace among themselves—are exhibiting much rancorous feeling towards the brethren of their own separate communities—one section openly accusing another of a grievous departure from the Christian faith: which is already leading to further divisions.

Witness what is now going on in the Baptist Union, where one of its leading preachers declares that in their very midst “the Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of the Scriptures is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the Resurrection into a myth.” And another eminent minister says that “too many ministers are toying with the deadly cobra of ‘another Gospel,’ in the form of ‘modern thought.’” And this terrible downward influence, it is feared, is extending itself to other Nonconformist bodies; which will certainly lead to further disintegration and decadence among those who think themselves free to choose what kind of religion they like. It seems as if this principle of “religious liberty” would be their overthrow; and, that since they will not hearken

diligently to the earnest prayer of our Lord that they should be one, and honestly endeavour to obey His will, they shall be filled with their own devices. And then it may be when God's hand is heavy upon them they will see the evil of their doings in separating, and in casting away their anchors and rudders, so that they know not whither they may be drifted, and be ashamed; since this may be the method by which God may bring back the wandering sheep that have erred and strayed from His way. God often "moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform," as it has been rightly said; and this may be one great means by which He may still incline the hearts of many people more and more towards Christian unity.

But let us now see what the feeling is abroad in distant countries; for this desire for unity has extended far and wide. Our attention should be drawn first to a remarkable Report of what took place at the Triennial Convention of the American Church, in the Autumn of 1886, on *Christian unity and Intercourse*. We are told that at the meetings of this Thirty-sixth Convention, forty-nine fully organized Dioceses, and thirteen "Missionary jurisdictions" were represented by the Bishops and the representatives of the Clergy and Laity. In the first instance a petition was laid before the Convention, signed by 1,100 Clergymen, including thirty-two Bishops, and by 2,100 leading Laymen; as to the expediency of furthering the organic union of Christians throughout

the United States. This shows of itself how largely the desire for Christian unity is there taking hold of the public mind. The petition contained ten items; there is no need that we go through them all here; we will only give a few sentences from them to shew the drift of it. It says: "(2) The desire for Unity is growing stronger among 'those who profess and call themselves Christians.' Those outside our pale shew a lively interest in the work of the Church, as was evinced in the late Missions in New York. On the other hand, Churchmen are more ready to acknowledge the vast amount of truth which other Christian bodies hold in common with them, as it is forcibly shown by the strong declaration which the Bishop of Lincoln has lately made on that subject. (3) The vanishing of party lines within the Church, and the readiness of Churchmen humbly to welcome new lights in dealing with their Christian brethren without. (4) The tendency in the religious world to deprecate further schisms. (5) The seeking for historic truth by those who are looking towards the ancient Church for guidance." These items are set forth as indications of a hearty desire in Christians generally to draw closer together in the bonds of fraternal love.

The Bishops, considering this important petition together in their own chamber, wisely determined not to precipitate matters, but referred the memorial to the Committee on the State of the Church. They however, eventually put forth an Address, in which,

after reciting the appointment of a Commission of Bishops in 1853, empowered to confer with other Christian bodies, and referring to the declaration of the Episcopate in 1880, that it was the right and duty of the Episcopates of all National Churches holding the primitive Faith and Order, and of the several Bishops of the same, to protect, in the holding of that Faith and the recovering of that Order, those who have wrongfully been deprived of both, and this without demanding a rigid uniformity or the sacrifice of their national traditions of worship and discipline or their rightful autonomy—the address proceeds as follows, in words that should command our most serious attention:—

“Now, therefore, in pursuance of the action taken in 1853 for the healing of the divisions among Christians in our own land, and in 1880 for the protection and encouragement of those who had withdrawn from the Roman obedience, we, Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Council assembled as Bishops of the Church of God, do hereby solemnly declare to all whom it may concern, and especially to our fellow Christians of the different communions in this land, who, in their several spheres, have contended for the religion of Christ:

“(1) Our earnest desire that the Saviour’s prayer ‘that we all may be One,’ may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled.

“(2) That we believe that all who have been duly baptised with water in the Name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church.

“(3) That in things of human ordering or human choice relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of their own.

“(4) That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communion, but rather, co-operating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.

“But, furthermore, we do hereby affirm that the Christian Unity now so earnestly desired by the Memorialists can be restored only by the return of all Christian Communion to the principles of Unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence: which principles we believe to be the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order, committed by Christ and His Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its stewards and trustees for the common and equal benefit of all men.

“As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and, therefore, as essential to the restoration of unity

among divided Branches of Christendom, we count the following, to wit :—

“(i) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God.

“(ii) The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

“(iii) The Two Sacraments—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

“(iv) The historic Episcopate locally adapted in the methods of its ministration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

“Furthermore : Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which afflict the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorised response to this declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the condition under which such a priceless blessing might happily be brought to pass.”

Thus we see how warmly and seriously the Church of the United States was prepared to open the way to Christian Unity for the several bodies that were separated from them, so that their willingness to forward the design led them to the utmost extent they could go to, if not beyond what they were justified ; so much so, that in reading the declaration

it seemed that they were overstepping the boundary line, and in some degree breaking down the divine fence with which Christ would compass and defend His Church from the world. They, however, endeavour to guard themselves by other expressions, so that they should not be misunderstood as bartering away the fundamental principles of the Church herself for the sake of promoting this unity so much to be desired. There is, however, sufficient ground to show the advisability of the American Bishops consulting with their brethren in the English Church, or obtaining the opinion of those who meet in the forthcoming Pan-Anglican Synod, before any settled scheme be sanctioned by them. They will at least feel better satisfied, and see more clearly what definite course they should take in the future, after taking brotherly counsel with them.

There are other circumstances of deep interest on this subject which took place at this Triennial Convention, such as the Reports brought up by "The Committee on the State of the Church." We say reports, for there were two—one from the majority, and one from the minority: one suggesting the opening of a correspondence with the denominations around them; the other, that it is inexpedient to take this step at the present time, until it is known whether these Christians are willing to secure this unity on the terms proposed; though they acknowledge at the same time that "*there has been an immense amount of yearning for unity, expressed in every variety of language.*"

Then there were the further remarks made on the subject by the Bishops in their final Pastoral Letter, with which it is usual to close the Convention. But for want of space we must pass them over ; though the observations made in these documents are really of great value.

We must notice, however, that a response was made to the Declaration of the Bishops by some of the Denominational bodies : thus, the General Conference of the Congregational Churches, meeting in Connecticut shortly afterwards, forward a reply, saying, that they gladly receive the message which the Bishops send as concerning them : " We heartily welcome it as conceived and issued in the Spirit of our Common Lord, and as betokening the approach of a brighter and better day for the whole Church ; we earnestly reciprocate both its courteous, kindly, and fraternal spirit, and the desires and sentiments which it expresses ; and we devoutly give thanks to our Common Heavenly Father that He has put it into the hearts of our beloved brethren to send forth such a message of peace." And they further express their " full belief that all our Churches are substantially in agreement with our Episcopal brethren, as touching the first three of the four (principles) to wit, *the Holy Scriptures, the Statement of Christian Faith, and the Sacraments* ; at least, we are assured, and do hereby testify joyfully, that, as touching these three points, there is no bar to complete union between them and us." The only point of objection they

make is relative to "the Historic Episcopacy," which is the fourth principle; regarding which they state that they "are far from a conviction of its Scriptural derivation, yea, and are accustomed to regard it as a note of division, rather than of unity in the Church; yet we do not despair of some sufficient reconciliation of our diverse opinions on this point, but are greatly increased in hope thereof by the general tenour of this message." The hope of a reunion is, then, warmly entertained by a large number of what are called the Free Churches, and the cause of division and dissension is apparently narrowed down to a single point, which a little fuller light from the history of the early ages of the Church would be likely to clear up and settle, so that there might be really little, eventually, to keep these bodies asunder.

The Presbyterians of New York are not disposed, however, to be so readily reconciled; for while requesting that the Message of the Bishops may be made an overture to their next General Assembly, they profess to accept the four principles of the Bishops; but, subject to their own interpretation of them. They recognise the Nicene Creed as an admirable statement of Christian doctrine, as against Unitarianism, Arianism, Sabellianism, and the like, but they insist also on the Westminster Confession. They reaffirm the "essential doctrine of the Two Sacraments," but they deny that the Sacraments have any virtue. They recognise "the Historic Episcopate," but they assume that they were

Presbyterians. From this manner of viewing the Message of the Bishops, then, we may judge that matters are not yet ripe for any decided action; still we must not be too disheartened, nor yet too hasty: the appearance on the whole is promising, things are more hopeful, and the movement progressing more than with us in England: but any rash step or immature measure might only retard the end in view. Time must be given for considering the points of difference that are thought to exist, and the terms on which the basis of union can be made; and time allowed for further research and inquiry into subjects, such as a thorough reconsideration of Scripture testimony, before their minds can be fully made up. As also into the historical evidences of the first two or three centuries, and the foundations of the Christian unity that existed before the time of Constantine the Great. The wisdom, therefore, of the larger portion of the Convention was displayed in thinking it undesirable in the present state of affairs to open correspondence with the various bodies of Christians in the land, while as yet there is no settled basis of negotiation. A little prudent delay will not be lost or hinder the work, but this opening of the question of unity, may, and it is trusted, will lead to something more definite before long.

It is not only, however, in America that this great matter has deeply engaged the minds of Christian people, and been brought prominently forward. In the General Synod of the Australian

Churches, held in the Autumn of 1886, the question was seriously and hopefully discussed, *the Bishop of Adelaide* proposing: "That this Synod desires to place on record its solemn sense of the evil of the unhappy divisions among professing Christians; and through his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury respectfully prays the Conference of Bishops to be assembled at Lambeth in 1888 to consider in what manner steps should be taken to promote greater visible unity among those who hold the same creed." This motion was supported by the Bishop in a lengthened and able speech; and was seconded by *the Bishop of Brisbane*. *The Bishop of Tasmania* also spoke on the motion in very wise and thoughtful language. He considered it would be unwise to begin to formulate any specific scheme for bringing about the unity of all Christians. Greater unity was wanted in their midst. There should be a deeper sense in their hearts of the facts that we were all in great trespass before God, so long as there was schism among Christians. He would, however, like it to go forth from the Synod to their brethren who were separated from them, that they were yearning in their hearts after fellowship and union with them. They desired to love them as brethren in Jesus Christ.

So, also, at the Synod at Cape Town, South Africa, in the Autumn of 1887, it was unanimously resolved: "That this Synod, through the President, respectfully ask the Lambeth Conference, which is to

assemble next year, to take the union of Christian bodies into consideration, and to commend the use of a prayer for the same in the daily offices of the Church."

Thus we see how many of the leading Christians in distant and widely separated portions of the world have had their minds almost simultaneously of late drawn towards the consideration of this great subject. Some of the sad evils attendant upon the divisions and dissensions of Christians have been forced upon their attention; and while they are sorely distressed about them, they are led not only to long for the return of unity, but are ready to enter upon some well devised scheme, which shall be generally accepted and yet still be in keeping with the order laid down by the Apostles. Hence it seems as if a new era for Christianity were about to dawn upon us; there is a prospect opening out of a great change for the better—that some means may before long be found of doing away with to a large extent this woeful separation and discord that prevails, and that some basis of true Scriptural unity for all Christians may be settled upon; such as has not been witnessed or enjoyed for many hundreds of years. A cry seems to come from the ends of the earth, teaching us to say, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline all our hearts to accomplish Thy Holy Will, that we may be one as Thou wouldest have us to be." Yea, it may be that the Lord has listened to the prayer of many souls; and that His Holy Spirit

is now moving the hearts of His people; which has raised this cry from so many quarters.

A review, however, of the several cases or examples that have been noticed, would suggest to thoughtful minds a few practical points. The common experience of life teaches men, that where large bodies or separate communities are concerned, and have to agree upon some important measure which necessarily greatly affects them all, a satisfactory result is seldom arrived at, unless they previously come to an understanding as to what the main points of deliberation are to be, and the terms of agreement in outline well and distinctly laid down by which they would abide. This stage does not yet appear to have been attained, the preliminary steps have not been taken for having one definite basis of Christian Unity. And until that state of things exists, with respect to any matter that might be the subject of controversy, it is usually not thought desirable to formulate the conditions of union. Besides, where so great a desire for unity exists, to take such a serious course, if it did not succeed, would be apt rather to accentuate and increase the differences, as well as to make the danger of continued separation greater than it was before. This step, then, of defining the terms of union should only be undertaken when the principles of agreement are first settled by the parties concerned, and when there is a good prospect of succeeding. The failures in the past should warn our leaders not to hazard such a good cause by a throw,

or precipitancy where evidently the Spirit of God is working upon the hearts of His people. We must not hurry God's work, or become impatient.

What, then, is our duty at the present time? What can we do for the best to further this great movement? It is a time rather for inquiry, for making a fresh and diligent search, to know more accurately what the will of the Lord is, and to make it known to others; and to do this, till the divine principles and necessity of Christian Unity are better understood, and more generally accepted. The awakened desire must be allowed time to grow and spread; we must not force this desire even, until opportunity has been given for further consideration, for fresh and further investigation. And nothing can be better than for those in whom this desire is strongly felt, to have recourse to the Lord Himself, who is the Head of the Church, in fervent prayer, and in hearkening seriously to what He says in His Word; pondering over what He has made known, and drinking in the sense of it—learning the full meaning of what He spake, through the words of His inspired Apostles and by the example and conduct of those Primitive Christians who had been brought up at their feet, and guided into the way and plan designed by Christ for those who believed on Him; showing to them how Christ would have His followers to be knit together in one communion and fellowship. The very fact of making the Lord our Centre, our Light, our Teacher above all else; our trying most

of all to get to know and understand what He would have us to do; learning it, too, from those whom He had Himself instructed privately, and who had communicated it more at large to their converts and had put them into the way of walking according to the Lord's design—the very fact of doing this, will of itself, incline our hearts towards our brethren separated from us as yet, and prepare us better than any other course, for a more abiding unity.

Even should the cause languish then, and our sanguine hopes not come to maturity so soon as we wish, the present movement of heart-yearning for unity, and the anxious desire that an attempt after it should be made, will not be in vain; some good fruit will come out of it, though we do not get the full harvest as yet. For this we must wait God's time, when He may, if not now, prepare and open the way, and incline His people towards the accomplishment of it. For respecting this movement also it may be said, in the words of the Prophet Habakkuk: "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

The basis of true Christian Unity is a subject, then, of unquestionable importance: one that is likely before long to come more prominently than it has yet done before the Christian world; one about which much inquiry will be made; it calls for a solution; the time has come when search must be made respecting it; when we must avail ourselves more of

the light thrown upon it by Scripture testimony and the records of Primitive Christianity, so that the subject may be thoroughly canvassed in all its bearings; for it is one that demands our profoundest thoughts, and most thorough investigation. The triumph of our Redeemer's Kingdom, and the saving health of many souls, in a great degree depend upon it.

CHAPTER IV.

UNITY AMONG THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

NOTWITHSTANDING what has been said about the evils of separation, there is still a feeling or sentiment prevalent in some minds that what exists, and continues, and spreads, must somehow be right, and good, and wholesome ; and therefore, that since these Divisions and Dissensions exist and flourish to a certain extent, there is nothing very wrong in the principle of them, and that a place should be found in the Church for all sects and parties that cause and maintain them. It is therefore to be observed that some things are allowed to exist, and do spread which are not good and right in themselves, as sin, and disease, and disorder ; you cannot wholly prevent these, but you may do much to check them ; you may take measures to prevent them spreading and becoming chronic : you must not think that because they exist, and cannot wholly be rooted out, you must give way to them, and allow them, and imagine there is no evil in them. No ! Your duty and your interests are to do away with the evils, and remedy them as far as you can : to promote holiness in the place of sin, health in the place of disease, and to bring order and regularity out of disorder and confusion : and so also, though divisions and dissensions do exist and may continue among Christians, we ought none

the less to oppose them, and as far as in our power lies put an end to them, and in their place bring about unity, peace, and harmony of action.

It is further contended that these divisions and dissensions appear to meet a natural want in our nature, for which some allowance must be made, which seems to necessitate their existence. It is urged that because there is a diversity of minds and a diversity of views, divisions and dissensions must take place—that they are a necessity, and that unity in one body or large Society, under one kind of government, is not possible. It is argued that the power or liberty of expressing our own views gives more scope and freedom to thought and religious feeling; and that the desire to advance and perpetuate these opinions or views certainly lead to divisions—to the setting up separate independent bodies or societies, so that it does not seem so desirable, if it were even possible, to confine Christians to one large body or universal community. And in support of these views it is said: You cannot adopt a Procrustean system, and make all think alike, any more than you can make all men of the same size and stature; and therefore it is useless to attempt it, and you must make the best of things as they are; for if you have liberty of thought and freedom of speech you will have disputes upon many points, and dissensions will necessarily follow.

Now there is some degree of truth in all this, but there is also much error and harm. There is,

indeed, hardly any error or evil for which something may not be said. Even for sin in a variety of cases, it may be said, it is the infirmity of human nature, and it could not be helped. Therefore you have always to look this matter or question fully in the face to ascertain whether it is right or wrong; and to let your own conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, guide you: you have to weigh the matter well over in your mind, because of the subtle reasoning which is advanced, and examine the question before you, as to how God would regard it, before you get at the true view of the case as a whole. And in this light, as you know sin of every sort to be wrong and ought to be resisted, so also are you in like manner assured that divisions and strife among Christians as now carried on are sore evils, and to be avoided; that they are contrary to God's will, and work much harm.

Christians, notwithstanding many differences that existed, did live together for many centuries in olden times *as one body in Christ*; therefore it is possible. They found a great blessing in the union and fellowship which they enjoyed under the government and discipline of the Church which then existed, infinitely more than we do now in our disunited state; therefore it is desirable. The Faith was once for all delivered to the saints, and their chief object was to keep it pure and entire, and so they all spoke the same things, and had as it were but one voice. There was one Body or Society for all Christians by Christ's

appointment, into which they had been received, in which they were to be trained and perfected as belonging to Christ, and through which they were to be saved; and therefore they felt it to be essential to their souls' welfare, and as their highest privilege, to continue acknowledged members of it. In the fold of Christ they could go in and out, and find pasture, but they were not tempted to leave it. It was their spiritual home, wherever they were, or however circumstanced: in it, and as visibly united to it, they felt themselves to be "no more strangers and pilgrims, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

The growth and unity of the Primitive Church, which went side by side—for it grew because it was so united—and was something marvellous, and such as astonished the world. All the powers of the world were arrayed against it, and yet it conquered the world; so that the civil powers at last laid down their arms and weapons of war, and came round to the side of the Church of Christ. There is something not only really wonderful, but deeply instructive and encouraging to our perseverance in the Faith and union with the Church, when we consider the circumstances under which they of old kept together as one body, and remained constant unto death.

We can, in some degree, account for the progress of the Gospel in Apostolic days, when the truths of our Salvation through Christ Jesus were confirmed by miracles, for God was bearing the Apostles witness

before the world, that the message they delivered was true. Besides which, there were many of their own company that could bear direct testimony to some of the great facts of the Gospel. They had not only seen, in common with the people, the blessed Jesus put to death when He was crucified upon the cross, but they had seen Him alive after His resurrection from the dead,—for on one occasion, the Lord Jesus had appeared to “above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present;” *i.e.*, the time when St. Paul wrote;—and they could testify to this astounding fact as a reality. It was a miracle which, of all others, not only itself witnessed to the truth of the Gospel, but which told upon those who heard of it in a way which nothing else could do, and made them think. For these men, who had seen Jesus after He had risen from the dead, could come forward and say to those who listened to the Apostle’s statements: “Yes, we ourselves have both seen and heard the blessed Jesus after He rose from the dead;” thus confirming the words spoken by the Apostles. And as we think of these things we cease to wonder at the rapid spread of Gospel truth; for it came with such force, and freshness, and vividness, that it took great hold on all who heard the Word. “And Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes, both of men and women.” (Acts v. 14).

But the period alluded to is one succeeding this; when the Apostles and first witnesses that had seen Jesus after that He had risen from the dead,

had passed away, and were no longer with them, and the age of miracles had come to a close; while the Church of Christ had still to contend against great odds, and Christians had only their faith in Christ to sustain them, and their union with one another. This first period of the Primitive Church was spread over about two hundred years, from about A.D. 100 to the conversion of Constantine, when the civil authority took Christianity under its protection, and granted it many favours and privileges. During this intervening period the Christians had not only to encounter the hatred and opposition of the Jews, but the whole world was incited against them, and attempted to crush the very existence of Christianity and stamp it out.

Those who openly and boldly confessed Christ were frequently cast to the wild beasts, for the sport and amusement of the populace: or they were racked and tortured in a hundred ways; for their blood was shed like water round about in divers places. And yet, withal, the Church grew and waxed strong, multitudes of men and women still flocked into the fold of Christ; so that it came to be a saying, that elucidated the truth of what happened, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." For, for every one of the vast numbers who fell as witnesses for Christ, others were ready to come forward and take their place, and more than fill up the ranks. All this astonished the heathen world; they could not understand it. That

the Christians should be willing to part with all their prospects and advantages in the world, with all that made life dear and pleasant to them, and be ready to lay down even life itself, rather than deny the Lord that redeemed them, was something beyond their conception.

Though the persecution of the Christians at times ceased—for their foes occasionally wearied of their cruel work, and doubts entered their minds as to the wisdom of their course, when they saw how the religion which they wanted to exterminate still grew—yet even in seasons when they were left in peace, the Christians were everywhere regarded by the civil powers as outlaws; they were at the mercy of everyone who had a spite against any of them, and who wished to provoke animosity against them, or injure them; and there was no redress or protection for any of them. One thing that grievously provoked the hostility of the heathen world against them was this, that Christianity condemned all their various forms of religion, and the false gods they worshipped. The heathen would have moderated their rage against them, if Christianity had taken its place as one out of many; but it stood alone, and would not receive any into her ranks, unless they wholly renounced all idolatrous worship, and heartily embraced the religion of Christ, as the only way of salvation.

These Christians were not without their faults and failings; they were men compassed with natural infirmities as we are; they had their special tempta-

tions and trials, inducing them to withdraw from the Church of Christ; false brethren still continued to creep in, and were ready to deceive the elect; there were some who tried to set the faithful against those who had rule over them, and some who contended with them on various points, as now, and were too willing to find fault with them: and then there were those without, still professing Christianity, who would not submit to authority, wanting to have some distinguished position of power for themselves, and had therefore either withdrawn from the Church, or been turned out, and were striving to draw others after them. Besides, there were those who in times of persecution fell away; they shrank back and would not confess Christ, from fear of suffering; and some even denied the Faith before the fiery ordeals prepared for them, or when some cruel death stared them in the face.

Heresies and schisms thus arose to vex and trouble the Church; but by reason of them the unity of the Primitive Christians came out the more distinctly to view; the faithful were made manifest, and became the more cemented together, as a compact body, though existing everywhere. They could not abide to have within their company anywhere those who persistently held any views or doctrines contrary to, or subversive of the Faith, as it had been received in all the Churches, and as it had come down to them from the beginning. If any heretical teaching prevailed in any District, Diocese,

or Province, the faithful were enjoined—should any difficulty arise in ascertaining the exact truth about the matter—to inquire of the principal Churches near to them, as Tertullian shews, as to what was the true Faith or view respecting the matter in dispute. And the vigour and reality of their unity in the Faith was shewn in their not resting until those who had attempted to corrupt it had either retracted their errors or been expelled from the body. And, if needful, their brethren in the other Churches would come to their assistance; and in a Provincial Council, would formally condemn the heresy, and excommunicate all who perversely adhered to it; at the same time informing the other Churches, so that they might be on their guard, and give no countenance to it. The contentions for the Faith were at times even fierce and turbulent, when their opponents tried by every artifice and force they could use, to pervert the truth and bring in “damnable heresies;” the which but proved that the Faithful were of one mind as to Doctrine, and were ready to contend earnestly for it, as St. Jude had exhorted them.

And so also was the unity of these Primitive Christians displayed and exercised in their conformity to *one rule* and order of things in every District, Diocese, or Province, where they lived: this, however, as a natural result, led to the excision of those who would not conform; and hence schisms arose. The faithful Christians were not allowed in any locality to have other places of worship, where the rule and

order was different from what had been authorised ; but they must assemble together in the appointed place for the neighbourhood, and be guided and instructed in their holy religion by the appointed ministers. If some became unruly and conceited, walked not orderly, and tried to create dissension and division, they were speedily censured ; the Bishop or Synod was appealed to, and they were compelled to yield obedience, or to take their departure. The true unity of the body could not be maintained without some such discipline. Wrongs and errors were sometimes committed by those in authority, too : but whenever anyone had a fault to find, or was in any way seriously dissatisfied, there was a proper way or method of having the matter well looked into by some higher power, and some solution come to, to which all must submit, if they would continue in union with the Faithful. Hence this unity of the Primitive Christians was the better secured, and became the more apparent. And though those who left the Church of their own will, or were expelled from it, mostly tried to imitate the ways of the Church, and appear like those who belonged to her fold, yet it was well understood and acknowledged that there was a wide difference between them, and that they did not belong to the Church of Christ, which still continued at unity in itself.

Even the highest authorities in the Church were subject to the rules and regulations for preserving the order, unity, and well-being of Christians. No Bishop

was allowed to have authority or jurisdiction in the Diocese or Province of another, or to intrude where one already existed. No Bishop committed a wrong, but could be called to account by a Synod of Bishops in his own Province, who were all alike concerned for the general welfare of the Church. No minister under any Bishop was suffered to gather an assembly of Christians, and set himself up to be their minister, in the place or neighbourhood where another already existed and was exercising his ministry. If the number of Christians became too many for him to look after, then a proper division was made and sanctioned by the Bishop, but not otherwise. Christians, in general, were not permitted to go from one place to another as they liked, or to neglect the worship of the Church, or the receiving of the Holy Sacrament, just as they pleased. They must be obedient to those who were over them in the Lord; and must attend upon the instructions of those who had to give an account of their souls. Very early among the Primitive Christians there appeared a code of regulations and decrees—said to have been begun from the decisions given by the Apostles themselves—for the maintenance of order and purity, the unity and discipline of the Church, so as to prevent disagreements, dissension, and divisions among Christians; and to which almost universal heed was then given. But more of these things hereafter.

Thus amid all her failings and defections, her sore trials and persecutions, amid heresies and schisms,

the Church was one, strong in her unity. She stood her ground and triumphed, through Christ in whom she firmly believed, and for whom she was willing to suffer.

Heart in heart, and hand in hand,
Once went forth the little band ;
One in thought, and word, and deed,
Unity their law and creed :
Then they conquer'd in the might
Of their oneness, and their right :
Then the will of God was done,
When they all "in Christ were one."

Then the Church of God arose,
Fair, despite of all her foes ;
On the broad foundation laid
Prophets and Apostles made ;
"Jesus Christ himself" alone
Basement rock, and corner-stone ;
All the rest, in modest pride,
Built on Him, and side by side.

Lord, Thy Church, in latter days,
Wanteth much these holy ways ;
Wanteth much that gain which lies
Ever in self-sacrifice ;
Self too proudly keeps its place,
Gifts precedence take of grace ;
Men are not content to be
Nothing, when exalting Thee.

MONSELL'S *Spiritual Songs*, p. 222.

Ages have passed since those glorious and memorable days, when the Church gave full proof of the might of her faith, and when in obedience to her Lord she continued steadfast and unmovable in the bonds of sacred unity. Though it was a terrible, searching, and anxious time for all who became Christians, there has not been since then a brighter or more attractive picture of holy brotherhood, and oneness of heart, to be found in all the changeful annals of Church History, than this period presents to our view. Never has there been a purer and nobler Christianity since then; for men dared to become Christians at the risk of their lives; and evil men and hypocrites were few and scarce in the Church; for persecution found them out, and want of obedience to those over them in the Lord discovered them. Few discordant sounds were heard among the faithful: but, brothers and sisters in Christ, they grasped each others hands in loving fellowship, and saluted each of those assembled, in solemn moments, with the kiss of peace. And in the hour of danger or of death they stood side by side, when they could, with those who were tortured, to help and encourage and administer comfort to their suffering brother, for many a one was ready of himself to encounter persecution, and give proof of his steadfastness. The profession of their faith, and their union with the Church was no vague sentiment or hollow thing. It was real, living, ennobling, and brought them sensibly closer to their Lord, for whom they counted all

things as nothing that they might "win Christ and be found in Him." It was a time when multitudes of the noble army of martyrs won their crowns; and when a countless number gave good evidence of their saintly character.

Nor was it the witness of the martyrs only, in thus laying down their lives as a testimony to the truth of Christianity, that alone exercised such a wonderful influence upon men. The very embracing of Christianity made a wonderful difference in the character of those who belonged to it in those early days; and drew them together as the members of one family in the Lord, which, notwithstanding the hatred and persecution it provoked, told amazingly on the people, and on earnest thinking minds. For not only did they see these men become Christians at the risk of their lives, and the probable loss of their social standing, the loss of their worldly goods, and of friends otherwise dear to them: but they heard that it was the bright hope of immortality that had attracted them, and love to Him who had died for them, that led them to do this. The people around them saw how gladly, and with what thankful hearts, they took upon them the yoke of Christ, and became obedient to His ways and precepts, which they were eager to learn; for in thus attaching themselves to Christ, through the holy ordinances He had ordained, and persevering therein, they were assured of the Life eternal; and that remaining steadfast they seemed to gain an enduring possession, a

happiness of soul, far beyond what the world could give them, or take away.

Hence the impression left upon the heathen world, which thus noticed the change of life that took place in those who became Christians. They could not but behold how altered their characters, dispositions, hopes, actions, and their behaviour towards those around them were. The religion brought to their view a new kind of life, of which they had no conception. Men became, and were made different to what they were before. Christians became noticeable in many ways, and presented a singular contrast to their neighbours among whom they lived; for however the early Christians wished to conceal their religion and avoid notice, it was sure in some way to become manifest, and be made a subject of inquiry; and often the more so, because they did not court attention. Not only did the Christians absent themselves from heathen worship, and idolatrous practices and customs; not only did they refuse to join in the heathen feasts, when the wines and meats dedicated to the idol gods were given free to the people; or go to the games in honour of them, provided without expense:—the which would not unfrequently incense others against them; but the whole manner of their lives were different. Those who had aforesaid been profligate and self-indulgent, restrained themselves, and became abstemious and self-denying; those who had been unkind, heartless, and cruel, now thought of, and began to care for others, and loved to help and

comfort their neighbours in troubles and sicknesses: those who had given way to anger and revenge, now tried to curb their tempers, and to bear with patience the wrongs done to them, praying for their enemies, and returning good for evil. Where before they had readily told lies to procure a temporary advantage for themselves, they would not now tell a falsehood for any gain. Where before they had been unscrupulous in deceiving their neighbours, or even secretly abstracting or stealing their goods, the Christians could now be trusted, and their words and promises more depended upon than the oaths or bonds of other men.

These Christians, living in any neighbourhood or town, formed a little band, loving and true among themselves, and were a mutual safeguard and strength to each other and to their brethren, warning them of danger, providing for their safety or needs, animating them continually to persevere in the new life they had chosen, reminding one another of their holy profession, and how careful they must be to keep themselves pure from the defilements of the world around them. Thus they were known as a people separated from the world, forming a community everywhere among themselves, bound together by the closest and most sacred ties. And though there were many that still hated and despised them, and shamefully intreated them, nevertheless the feeling grew that, somehow, they were a blessing in every neighbourhood where they lived: the character of the

place became changed for the better, so that not a few of those even who bear rule, could not but acknowledge how much they were indebted to them: the which, in many instances, led them to restrain the fury of those who sought their destruction.

The words of Scripture were frequently in their mouths; and the admonitions which they repeated to each other, and which were constantly spoken to them by those who watched over them, and cared for their souls, remind us often of those counsels, and of the descriptions of the Christians then, as given by the Apostle Paul in such passages as these:—

“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

“In love of the Brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honour preferring one another.

“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.

“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

“Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

“Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Rom. xii. 9-21. O. & N. v.)

The words of the Apostle came to them ever fraught with fresh life and vigour; and received an attention and observance of which in these days we have but little conception: for those who heard them scrupulously tried to model their lives by them, while consciously seeking after the Life Eternal. And therefore the Apostle’s call to arm for the Christian warfare, was to them as the sound of a clarion trumpet to soldiers in the early dawn of the battle day; when they heard these other words of his:—

“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.

“Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Rom. xiii. 11-14.)

Christianity was no trifling thing, no nominal profession with them; they felt that:—

Christian life's no bank of roses,
Where we idly sit and sing,
Till the gathering evening closes,—
Christian life's an earnest thing.

Full of vows and full of labour,
All our days fresh duties bring;
First to God, and then our neighbour,—
Christian life's an earnest thing.

MONSELL'S *Parish Musings*.

And so great was the change that it had wrought in them, that the delineation which St. Paul gives of some of his converts might fitly apply to them; so that they also might be addressed after this fashion:—

“And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world: according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

“Among whom also we had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. ii. 1-6.)

To God was all the glory due: for through His grace by Christ Jesus they had been made new men, and become the sons of God, and arose to the dignity of their high calling in Christ Jesus, so as to walk worthy of their profession as Christians. For though there were still many defections, as there always will be; and some who would still cause divisions and strife in the Church; the bulk of Christians remained steadfast, and testified to the *real change* that had also taken place in their lives; even as it was in the Church of Corinth, when St. Paul said:—

“Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind;

“Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

“*And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*” (1 Cor. vi. 9-11.)

The lives of these first Christians, then, were distinctly formed on the model of Scripture; the Society they had been admitted to they knew had been founded through the Apostles; and they were constantly reminded of their engagements to live holily and righteously in this present evil world. This

is evident from the writings of the earliest Christian authors after the Apostles. Thus, Justin Martyr, who wrote about A.D. 140, says:—"God hath enjoined us to withdraw men from shameful and disgraceful passions by our own meekness. And *we can show the effects of this in many instances.* Those who were once tyrannical and violent changed in their temper, either by imitating the forbearance manifested in their neighbours, or by observing the unusual patience of their fellow travellers when defrauded by the way, or by experiencing the good faith of those with whom they had business to transact." (Apol. sec. 16.) Thus Christians became examples for others to follow. And (sec. 67) he informs us that they were continually reminding themselves and each other of the responsibility they had taken upon themselves at their baptism. Tertullian, who was born A.D. 150, and converted about thirty-five years afterwards, arguing in defence of Christianity, and against the reproaches cast upon it, makes use of these remarks:—"Whosoever finds a Christian would rather find a criminal. Yet the training is sure to shew itself, and our good will come to light. If there is a halo of evil around the evil, why, against the common teaching of nature, should goodness brand us, and us only, worst of all? For what marks do we bear upon us but, firstly, Wisdom, whereby we give no worship to men's trumpery handiwork; then Abstinence, whereby we keep our hands from other men's goods; Modesty, which we will not pollute by a look; Pity, which inclines us to

the needy; ay, and Truth, whereby we give offence; ay, and Freedom, for which we have learned to die." (Ad. Nat. i. 4.) When tempted to do evil, the instruction given to them was: "Think of your pledge," and "your renunciation." When in danger and suffering: "Call to mind the engagement you made as God's soldier, and take heart." Or again, when some great advantage offered itself, which was likely to lead them wrong: "Do not break your word." "Remember your compact." Such were the warnings and admonitions Tertullian, in his other works, tells us were given to the Christians, and which they were bidden themselves to recollect. Hence, as one writer remarks, "they became afraid of sullyng their baptismal robe, doubtful whether even the Church could restore it to its original whiteness, after wilful defilement." Thus, on the one hand, there was a constant warfare individually kept up against all kinds of evil; and on the other, a vigorous effort day by day to become more and more perfect in the Christian life. And the further we learn about them, the more will it

"Make our lukewarm hearts to glow,
With lowly love and fervent will."

For it is no fancy picture or exaggerated statement that we are called upon to consider. For even Gibbon, the historian, who not unfrequently seems glad to bring forward something to the discredit of Christians, speaks in glowing terms of those in the olden times. "But the Primitive Christian," he remarks,

“demonstrated his faith by his virtues ; and it was very justly supposed that the Divine persuasion, which enlightened or subdued the understanding, must, at the same time, purify the heart, and direct the actions of the believers. The first apologists of Christianity who justify the innocence of their brethren, and the writers of a later period who celebrate the sanctity of their ancestors, display in the most lively colours the reformation of manners which was introduced into the world by the preaching of the Gospel.” (Decl. and Fall of the Rom. Empire, chap. xv., sec. iv.)

Again he says, shortly after : “It is a very ancient reproach suggested by the malice of infidelity, that the Christians allured into their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away, in the waters of Baptism, the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of the gods refused to grant any expiation. But this reproach, when it is cleared from misrepresentation, contributes as much to the honour as it did to the increase of the Church. The friends of Christianity may acknowledge, without a blush, that many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners. . . . As they emerged from sin and superstition to the glorious hope of immortality, they resolved to devote themselves to a life, not only of virtue, but of penitence.” (Ibid.)

And once more :—“When the new converts had been enrolled in the number of the Faithful, and were

admitted to the Sacraments of the Church, they found themselves restrained from relapsing into their past disorders by another consideration of a less spiritual, but of a very innocent and respectable nature. . . . Every member is engaged to watch with the most vigilant attention over his own behaviour, and over that of his brethren, since, as he must expect to incur a part of the common disgrace, he may hope to enjoy a share of the common reputation. When the Christians of Bithynia were brought before the tribunal of the younger Pliny, they assured the Proconsul that far from being engaged in any unlawful conspiracy, they were bound by a solemn obligation to abstain from the commission of those crimes which disturb the private or public peace of society; from theft, robbery, adultery, perjury, and fraud. Near a century afterwards, Tertullian, with an honest pride, could boast that very few Christians had suffered by the hand of the executioner, except on account of their religion. . . . It is a very honourable circumstance for the morals of the Primitive Christians, that even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from their virtues." (Ibid.)

As a proof, however, of the marvellous impression that the lives of Christians, as well as the constancy of the martyrs, exercised upon the heathen world, we must draw your attention to another point, viz:—The rapid development and growth of Christianity, to which allusion has been made, as contemporaneous with the *Unity* that was everywhere so largely and strikingly manifested, not only in adhesion to the

same doctrines, but to the same constitution and fellowship.

The power of divine faith was so remarkably displayed in the lives and conduct of Christians that it took hold of men with almost irresistible force, and brought them in vast numbers as suppliants to the Saviour's feet, with the earnest desire that they might be enrolled among His followers. Proofs of this are not wanting, but let the testimony of one witness suffice.

Tertullian, whose words we have but lately quoted, in his apology for the Christians, says:—"We are but of yesterday, yet we have filled your empire, your cities, your islands, your castles, your corporate towns, your assemblies, your very camps, your tribes, your companies, your palace, your senate, your forum—your temples are alone left to you." And intimates, that if they counted the armies of Rome, the number of Christians in a single Province were greater; and that, "if so large a body of men, as they were, should break away from the Roman Empire, and repair to some remote corner of the globe, the loss of so many citizens would cover the kingdom with shame, would punish it by their very desertion of it; that it would tremble at its own desolation, at the universal silence, at the death-like stupor that would ensue; that it would have to seek whom to govern; that more enemies would remain to it than citizens; it having now the fewer enemies, inasmuch as almost all the citizens were Christians."

(Apol. sec. 37.) Earlier on in the same work, Tertulian had said, "The State was besieged by Christians: that in the country, in the towns, in the islands, still there were Christians: that it was lamented as a misfortune that every sex, age, condition, and rank, was passing over to that name." (Sec. 1.) And in another work, he writes, that "though the Christians were so vast a multitude of men, almost the greater portion of every State, they nevertheless lived silently and modestly;" that "they were not as Moors, the Marcomans, or the Parthians, a people of one spot, but a people of the whole world." (Tert. ad Scapal, sec. 2.) And further, writing in another work, after enumerating various parts of the habitable globe, and among them, "those parts of Britain, which, though inaccessible to the Romans, are subject to Christ," he continues in glowing language:—"in all which places the name of Christ, who is already come, reigns, as the Being to whom the gates of every city are open, against whom none are closed, before whom the locks of iron are broken in pieces and the doors of brass are unfolded." (Tert. Adv. Judæos.)

Thus had "the grain of mustard seed," to which our blessed Lord had likened the rapid increase of the Kingdom of Heaven, grown and waxed great; so that His word in respect to it had been amply fulfilled; as also the words of the Psalmist which had foretold, that as a vine it had "*stretched forth its branches to the ends of the earth.*" But with all this extension of the Church to the most distant parts,

its dispersion over the whole world, *it was still one and the same, everywhere subject to the same kind of government, everywhere obeying the same sacred laws and regulations, everywhere having the same holy faith, and the same blessed aim and manner of life, so that the Christians were clearly distinguished from the rest of the world by their walk and conversation.* Thus imbued with the spirit of unity, the Church grew up to be “a holy temple acceptable to the Lord;” and stood firm amid the raging billows of this tumultuous world, for it was built upon a rock—even upon Christ, “the rock of ages.” And it is to be observed, that it was because of its unity—because Christians endeavoured to fulfil the great wish and design of Christ, to be as one compact people in this evil world, that this rapid and wonderful increase of Christianity took place; that such a high standard of holy living was so generally maintained, and so many were found willing to die for the faith of Christ; which so perfectly astounded and perplexed those who were so mad against it.

It is much to be desired that this period of the Church's history were better known; and it is a great pity, that from one cause or another, it is but lightly passed over: and that to most minds there is but a vague and indefinite conception of it. It stands between the New Testament account of the founding of the Church and its initiatory growth, and that of its great triumph when Constantine was converted, when the civil power of the Empire was disposed to

welcome Christianity, and enrol itself under her banner. The intervening history of the Church is to many minds almost a blank, save that they know that some terrible persecutions against the Christians arose. But as to the means which were used to keep the sheep of Christ's flock together, when the wolves entered the fold and attempted to kill and scatter them; how they held by one another as one body, amid the fierce struggle they encountered; who were the great heroes that endured the fight and how they were chiefly sustained, few seem to know, or even care to know. A vast amount of ignorance still prevails. And yet it forms one of the most glorious periods for Christianity in the annals of the world; its history is one of terrible and yet thrilling interest; and it has many a page bright with the stories of the battles of faith which were fought, and the victories won; it glows with the records of a great multitude of those who came off more than conquerors through Him who loved them, and died for them, and rose again. Christ's garments and body were marked with His own Blood, which He willingly shed for their Redemption: and many a martyr's clothes and flesh were made bright and red with the blood which they were ready to offer, in their varied sufferings, as witnesses of the truth as it is in Jesus. They were sore beset by the enemy of souls, who tried to make them yield and fall, and their tortures are too horrible to contemplate; but "they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;

and they loved not their lives unto the death." One dare not attempt to enter further upon such a field as this at the present, for time would fail us to tell of the wondrous growth of Christianity; of the virtuous and exemplary lives of these Primitive Christians; and of all that the throng of Martyrs and Confessors of the Faith in those early days had to pass through and endure: we must forbear; for we should be drawn away too far from the direct subject before us, which loudly calls for consideration. For how strong must have been the bond of their unity; what a solemn and mysterious tie must that have been that kept them so close to Christ and to one another. And yet it falls in most closely and appositely with our subject to speak of the means used for attaining and upholding this sacred bond of unity; and how out of weakness they were, by the grace of God, made strong; and how out of the base, selfish, worse than useless lives many of them had once lived, they became new men in Christ Jesus; a blessing to themselves and others; and at the same time adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And to the consideration of this, our attention must be drawn in the next Chapter.

For, if it had not been for their conscientious adherence to one common system of spiritual discipline and obedience, to which they were solemnly pledged, How could the Christians—so widely dispersed, so grievously assailed and composed of such different materials, from various ranks of the people, and taken

out of a diversity of nations and languages—have been held together as one people, in one Body? How, out of their frailties and temptations, were they kept so steadfast? How, without any resort to the carnal weapons of warfare or any blandishments that the world had to offer, did Christians become so strong and influential a people, that the temporal power should at last seek to make peace with them? There must have been something in the system adopted worth knowing; a hidden virtue and power that wrought such a change in them, as to attract mankind. And this was doubtless in their being first brought to Christ, and finding life in Him—pardon for their sins, grace and strength through the appointed means, and the hope of glory which possessed their souls. But how could this have been effected, and brought about, if the Apostles had not from the first founded the Church in accordance with the Will and Design of Christ, to bring those who believed in Him into union with Him, and thereby make them one, a compact people in one great Society? From the first, then, there must have been for these people a basis of Christian Unity, whereby they must abide, if they would be faithful members, and to which they must yield obedience, if they would remain in the body, and enjoy the inestimable blessings which Christ would give them.

And how could this Society continue, hold together, be advanced, and maintained, if the Apostles, in accordance with the will of Christ, had not laid down

some regular system of procedure? How could Christians have been trained and disciplined, kept as one people and so firmly cemented together, unless there had been some definite, and well understood, authorised government among them, to which they all everywhere submitted? And how could that have been upheld and been efficiently administered if there had not been some discipline?

In the following chapter, then, we must keep in mind (1) that the Primitive Christians were from the beginning admitted into a holy fellowship, into a visible spiritual Society, called the Church, taken out of the world, and yet in it; intimately connected with the temporal governments of the nations where it had taken root, yet in its spiritual character independent of them all. (2.) That this Society possessed a form of government of its own as necessary for its preservation, its unity, and its successful operations; binding all its members together by a common rule of obedience, and training them to the duties of their new profession. For, as it has been aptly said, "Government is indeed essential to the very being of a Society: without it many may congregate, but they cannot associate; the Constitution to which they submit is the bond which unites them; and when this is dissolved they are reduced again to the state of unconnected individuals." And (3) that the several members of the Church, wherever they were in the world, formed but *one body, under one Divine Head*, Jesus Christ our Lord; professing one and the same

Faith; bound by the same laws; obeying rulers similar in office, authority, and appointment. And in this wise, under this regimen, "the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of the measure of every part, made increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love;" notwithstanding the opposition and fury of its enemies. For had the Kingdom of Christ been "divided against itself," it must have been, in all human probability, "brought to desolation." But by the injunctions of Christ it was ordered far otherwise.

CHAPTER V.

THE UNITY OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS UPHELD BY CAREFUL TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE.

THE entrance into the Church, whereby men, one by one, became members of it, was, as now, and as Christ had ordained—by Baptism. But then, after the first settlement of Christianity by the Apostles and first preachers of the Gospel, it was not usual to admit candidates at once when they applied to be received. This Sacrament was looked upon with great solemnity, as the beginning of a new life, and as a new step for life; as one, if properly entered upon, and faithfully followed, brought unspeakable blessings to the devout recipients of it. As Christ, the author of our salvation had appointed it, they felt sure that He had some great purpose for their good in view. They recognised this Divine rite as their admission into a great and spiritual brotherhood of good and saintly men, to the principles and rules of which they were to remain steadfast; it was the oath of their allegiance to Christ their Lord, whereby they solemnly promised to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end.

But it was more than this to them. The belief and views of these Primitive Christians are perfectly and concisely expressed in the words of the XXVIIth Article of our Religion, which declares that "Baptism

is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed: Faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God." Therefore, men were not suffered to receive it lightly, or without due thought and consideration of what they were about to do, of the blessings in store for them, and the responsibilities they took upon them. A season of instruction and probation was appointed, and they were only allowed by degrees to attend the services of the Church. At the higher and more sacred parts they were not permitted to be present. During this period they were called *Catechumens*, a word derived from the Greek, signifying being taught by word of mouth. Certain of the clergy were specially designated for this work, and were called *Catechists*: as Origen in the Church of Alexandria, and Cyril at Jerusalem, who became noted for the zeal and manner in which they discharged this duty.

Thus those who desired to enter the communion of the Church were first carefully taught to understand the nature of their engagement in becoming members—what would be required of them, what their obligations, and how they would be expected to abide by its laws and constitution—as well as the blessed

advantages, and the hope of glory in the world to come, if they continued faithful. They were free to enter, or not; the right of private judgment was exercised in this—after they had come to a full knowledge of what they were about—in consenting or refusing to enter the community of Christians; but not in afterwards trying to live an independent life within its pale, but by a glad conformity to its rules and ordinances. No undue advantage was to be taken of them, nothing exacted of them in their obedience but what had been previously explained to them, and what they were willing to undertake: but having once pledged themselves in holy Baptism, they henceforth felt that they had bound themselves by a most solemn vow to live up to their holy profession, and were to be obedient to the counsels and direction of those that were over them in the Lord, if they did not wish to forfeit the blessings of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

The time fixed by the Apostolical Constitutions (viii. 32.) for the preparation and probation of converts from Heathenism or Judaism was three years; by some of the earlier Councils two years was the usual period. But in certain cases it was lessened or lengthened according to circumstances—the proficiency, piety, and earnestness of the candidate, or the lack of these, being the criterion as to the length of time. And in times of persecution, when they showed their readiness to encounter the fiery ordeal as part of their lot; or on being well assured of their devotion and

sincerity; or on the near approach of death in any case, the period was shortened.

There were different classes or degrees of Catechumens. At the first, they were not allowed to enter the assemblies of the Lord's people. Then they were admitted to hear portions of the service, to listen to the reading of the selected lessons of Scripture, the singing of hymns, and the address of the minister, but they were not suffered to join in the devotions of the congregation, in repeating the Creed, or in the Lord's Prayer; hence they were called *Audientes* or hearers. And when the Holy Eucharist was to be administered none of them were to remain, for a Deacon would cry out aloud, "Withdraw in peace, ye Catechumens." (Apost. Consti. viii. 5.) Moreover, during this time of probation they were instructed in the meaning of the words of the Creed, and of the Lord's Prayer, and of the Ten Commandments, and in all the elementary principles, rules, and order of the Christian religion. Inquiry was made into their past lives; their reason for wishing to join the Church; and whether they were willing, and were striving, to live a godly, righteous, and sober life. If these were satisfactory, they were then permitted to kneel and pray with the faithful, and were then known as the *Genuflectentes*. And finally their names were given in as applicants for Baptism, and submitted to the Bishop or chief pastor.

This was generally done at the beginning of Lent, when they were more publicly examined before the

faithful, as to their knowledge and attainments; and stricter inquiries were made at intervals during the forty days into their manner of life and the inclinations of their heart: as to whether they steadfastly purposed to lead a new life, and would persevere therein to their lives' end, even in the face of death. If it were found that they had relapsed into sin, or joined forbidden games or services, they were not yet to be received into full communion with the Church: but they were punished by being degraded from one degree of Catechumenship to another, or at the most, if again found guilty of some scandalous offence, their Baptism was to be deferred to the hour of death. Such were the decrees of the Council of Neocæsarea. And afterwards it was decreed in the General Council of Nice (Canon 14.) that if any of the Catechumens were found guilty of sin, if Prostrators, let them be degraded to the class of Hearers for three years, and after that be permitted to pray with the Hearers again. So also in the Council of Eliberis, held a little before this, it was decreed that Catechumens found lapsing were not suffered to come to Baptism, sometimes for three years, sometimes five, and in other cases were not to be permitted to receive it till the hour of death, according to the nature and degree of their offences. Thus the utmost care was taken as to whom should be received into the Church, and as to whether they had a steadfast purpose to lead a new life. At the same time they were specially admonished to give themselves to watching, fasting, and prayer;

and were then taught, but only towards the close of their probation, to repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, which they were afterwards to use. Then their names were usually enrolled in the *Album* or register of the Church: when they were called the *perfectiores* or *electi*. And the candidate might on this occasion give up his old Heathen or Jewish name, if he liked, and take another, to remind him afterwards that he had become a Christian, and had entered into a solemn covenant with God.

The final examination of candidates was conducted in the presence of the assembled faithful, previous to the ceremony of Baptism itself, which was very impressively performed. This appears in a curious instance named by Eusebius, which shews the custom of those early times, though it introduces a new phase of the subject. It had often been a moot question among the leading Bishops whether those who had been baptized by heretics and schismatics should be re-baptized when they joined the Church. St. Cyprian, and after him St. Basil and St. Augustine, held that though such baptism was null and void, yet if they found that it had been duly performed, they conceived that individuals might be publicly received into the Church without being re-baptized; since they had already been dedicated to Christ, and through the means He had appointed, though it had been done by persons not having authority in the Church. As an illustration of this, in the case alluded to, Dionysius, called "the great Bishop of Alexandria," and who

was said by Eusebius to be an old man in the year 265, writing to Xystus, Bishop of Rome, states that:—
“A certain person, who, for many years had assembled and communicated with the Church; both in his own time, and in the time of his predecessor, happened to be present on an occasion when some were being baptized; and upon listening to the interrogatives and answers that are usually made in that solemn service; afterwards came to me weeping and bewailing himself, and falling down at my feet, confessed that the baptism he had received among heretics was nothing like what he had seen in the Church, and protested against it, as full of impiety and blasphemy. And said, that his soul was full of trouble, and that he had not confidence enough to lift up his eyes unto God, having been initiated with what he considered impious words and ceremony. And, therefore, he prayed that he might have the benefit of this most perfect cleansing, a reception into the Church, and the grace thereby given. This thing, however, continues Dionysius, I durst not do, but told him, that his having communicated for so long a time at the altar was sufficient for this purpose. For I did not dare to re-baptize one who had been in the habit of hearing thanksgiving, and repeating the Amen, and standing at the Lord’s table, and extending his hand to receive the sacred elements, and had for a long time become a partaker of the Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Christ. I exhorted him, therefore, to take courage, and with a firm faith and

good conscience to approach and take part with the saints in the solemnity of the holy supper." (Euseb. Book vii. Chap. ix.)

It is not necessary here to enter upon the manner of administering the Sacrament of Baptism as performed in the Primitive Church; which, though it varied somewhat in different parts, was in its main features everywhere the same as it is now, and was highly instructive and interesting. Yet it should be observed that the principal time for administering it was Easter-Day, and also in the period between Easter and Whitsuntide; Ehipany was also a time chosen for it; and indeed on any Lord's day it might be performed; but Easter was the favourite time. It was, however, a universal custom both in the East and West, that a white garment, or *alb* made of linen, should be put upon the newly baptized; and be worn in the Church until the Sunday following. And on the day when the Church commemorated the descent of the Holy Spirit, all who had been baptized previously in the year, appeared in the assemblies of the faithful with their white garments on; hence this day came to be called "Whitsunday." These white garments were to be the emblems of the innocence and joy which should henceforth distinguish their lives; and had the effect of impressing upon them more significantly the holiness of their profession.

Confirmation by the Bishop then usually followed close upon Baptism; and the newly baptized were, without much delay, permitted to partake of the

Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ; and were henceforward reckoned among the Faithful. And it became a rule in the Church, that though a person had been baptized, as was mostly the case, by one of the Presbyters or Deacons, none should be permitted to come to the Lord's table, without being Confirmed by the Chief Pastor of the Church in that part. Not only was it a public recognition of those who had been baptized by one of the rulers of the Church that they were henceforth duly certified members, but it was an opportunity, when, after the manner of the Apostles, he would lay his hands upon them, and severally bless them, praying over them, and assuring them of the gift of the Holy Ghost which had been bestowed upon them, and the promise of heavenly grace by Christ in which it must be their endeavour to increase daily more and more, until they come unto His everlasting Kingdom. This, then, formed the authoritative permission or license of the Church, through one of her chiefs, that they were received as full members of the body, and that they had a right to take their place among the Faithful.

Now all this probation and training, this discipline and preparation, was well calculated to fit the new converts to become devoted and consistent members of the Church: to value the new position they had attained; so that afterwards they were not led to think lightly of it, or do anything to forfeit it. It helped them to realize more vividly and consciously that in becoming members of the Church, they had

been made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven:" and that they must take diligent heed to walk and live as such, with much circumspection, with much thankfulness, yea, and even with awe; and never from any temptation or fear—even the fear of death—to fall away, give up, or go back from their high calling in Christ Jesus. They felt in their inmost hearts, that—

It was indeed a solemn thing,
To be a vessel chosen of the Lord,
Washed in the Laver of His Blood,
Fed with the awful mysteries of His Holy Board!

Besides, they were afterwards personally cared for, and watched over; and a certain degree of discipline exercised when needful. They were associated and banded together with other Christians in the same neighbourhood where they lived; and by the mutual fellowship, the works of charity, the holy and upright lives they exercised themselves in, they mutually strengthened and encouraged one another, so that they would have been ashamed to go back from their profession; while thereby also they were stimulated to become examples of faithfulness, in the midst of a sinful and malicious world. Each one, who had been baptized and enrolled among the number of the faithful, was placed under the charge of one of the Clergy; most probably the one who had been the blessed instrument of bringing him to Christ; and would soon perceive any declension or departure from his steadfastness or devotion to his Saviour.

It was a fundamental right of the Church, and seemed necessary for her well-being, that she should have power to receive into, and exclude from her communion, such persons, whom, according to the laws of Christian Society, she thought fit; for then, as now, there were those who having been admitted to this high position to be members of Christ's Church, thought that they had done all that was necessary, and in time began to grow careless, and to relax in their steadfastness and devotion; and some even to become indifferent to their religion. Then, as now, there were those, who little by little gave way to the temptations of the world, the flesh, or the Devil, which they had continually to encounter, and more or less began to decline in their Christian faithfulness, which would after a while discover itself in their manner of life or their non-attendance upon the ordinances of religion. Then there was, what we have not now, which must be constantly borne in mind, the civil authority decidedly opposed to Christianity, and the constant fear of persecution, already alluded to, which, when it arose, some so dreaded to encounter, that they feared to make, or drew back from making, any profession of Christianity before their neighbours, and even to shun the company of those who were known to be such, lest it should be discovered that they belonged to that body. How did the Church deal with such cases? Did she leave them alone, and take no notice of them? Oh no! There was then one over them whose duty it was to

speak plainly to them in private and reprove them, and recall them to a sense of their duty and of their high estate. One who had the charge of them, and was responsible to the Bishop for their conduct; and was bound to report to him as his chief, those who had done anything whereby they had disgraced their holy profession, or had taken part with those who opposed it, or were ashamed of it, and had absented themselves from the assemblies of the faithful, or had not of late come to the Holy Communion. And this the Clergy were better able to do in those days than now, for the Bishops held closer and more intimate communion with them, as the Dioceses were usually of smaller extent than they are in this country.

The usual course taken with such defections in those early days of the Church's history was this, as far as can be discovered. The Clergyman who had been solemnly appointed to watch over a number of the faithful would first by kindly remonstrance endeavour to bring the offender back to a sense of his fault, failing, or misdemeanor: if he remained obstinate, and chafed at any interference, and would not come forward voluntarily to acknowledge how wrong he had been, and promise amendment, the matter must be brought before the Bishop of the Diocese, who would then send for the offender, and speak to him himself in private, and endeavour to bring him to a due sense of his errors; if he would not still acknowledge his guilt, then the Bishop would summon

two or three of the faithful, who were well known, and held in reputation; and in their presence solemnly admonish the offender to amend his ways, or he would have to proceed against him. In most cases, at one or other of these stages, he would come to a better mind, acknowledge that he had done wrong, and promise to do differently, and act more as a Christian should do for the future.

For, as St. Chrysostom says, men should be *persuaded*, not *forced*, to forsake their sins: because God rewards not those who, through necessity forsake their sins; but such as do so voluntarily.

But if not, the matter was brought before a small select Council of the Church, in the same Diocese, and if the man still remained obdurate, sentence was pronounced against him. In the first instance he was prohibited from coming to the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, which he had probably neglected; but to be debarred from which was to make him the more sensible of his crime; also, it was designed to arouse him to a sense of his soul's danger when he was debarred for a time from at all entering the assemblies of the Church, or joining in holy worship with the faithful. Sometimes this suspension lasted but a short time; three Sundays was appointed for a venial offence, but for greater sins, not unfrequently a man was excommunicated for two or three years; and even for ten, fifteen, and twenty years. This was called the lesser excommunication, and was felt to be a great disgrace

and punishment. There was, however, a still further step: if the man remained obdurate, then what was called the greater excommunication was pronounced against him, and he was cast out of the Church altogether, his name was erased from the roll of membership, and the faithful ceased to have any fellowship or intercourse with him; he was henceforth to be unto them "as an heathen-man, or a publican."

These sentences were usually pronounced in the place where the offender had been accustomed to worship; it was done very solemnly and sadly as a most serious matter, since it was accounted as a forerunner of condemnation in the great day of Judgment. Though some one was specially deputed at times to do this, Tertullian tells us, "that it is part of the Bishop's office to cast out of the Church." And in another place he says: "all grievous crimes are to be watched against with such care, that we must not only shun the crimes but those who commit them." And elsewhere speaking upon the matter, he says, "There are exhortations, reproofs, and the Divine censures." And speaking of the Bishops: "They judge with great authority, as being assured that God is present with them; and if any offend in such manner as to be excluded from communicating in prayer, from the assemblies, and from all religious intercourse, it is a strong presumption of their condemnation in the last judgment." (Apol. ch. xxix.)

Origen also tells us, "how severe is their discipline towards sinners, especially those who have been

defiled with lust, whom they drive out of their common assembly the Christians lament over those who have been overcome by lust or any other crime, as persons dead to God. And if after this they give sufficient proof of their penitence and amendment, they undergo another probation, which is longer than that before their first admission into the Church; and this being completed, they are re-admitted as men raised from the dead. Yet whoever is found lapsing from his first admission, is for ever excluded from all offices and government in the Church of God." (Adv. Celsum Zom. I., p. 481.) And this celebrated writer remarks in another work, "Though he (the wicked person) shall be concealed from the Bishop, or escape exclusion through his partiality, yet he is self-condemned." (Homil. XII. : Levit. XXI) Intimating in this place, as well as in two or three others, that the power of excommunication was lodged in the hands of the Bishop.

Eusebius gives several instances of the exercise of this power; and some which show us that it was inflicted not only on the offending laity, but upon the Clergy also when needed, and on those, too, high in office. There was a certain Natalius, who, in one of the persecutions, had suffered for the faith, but was afterwards led away and tempted by the disciples of Theodotus, a heretic, to be their Bishop. This man afterwards becoming sensible of his crime, covered himself with sackcloth, and thus habited, went and prostrated himself before the Bishop of his Diocese;

and cast himself at the feet of the Clergy and laity, as they went into Church, entreating to be restored to their Communion, which was at length, but not without some difficulty, granted. (Euseb. Eccl. Hist.: lib. v., ch. 28). Further on in his history of the Primitive Church, this writer gives us an account of one of the Bishops, holding a very prominent position, viz., Paul Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, being deposed from his office, and formally excommunicated, because he denied our Lord's divinity; but this was done by a great company of Bishops assembled together, since Antioch was one of the Metropolitan Sees. (Lib. vii., ch. 29). And in Cyprian's works several instances are recited of excommunication, which he found it necessary to exercise, so as to preserve order and purity in the Church over which he presided.

The restoration of those who were penitent was always preceded by penance, differing, both as to kind and duration, according to the nature of the offence. If the offence had been flagrant and public, the sinner was put to open penance. Sometimes they were to appear clothed in sackcloth with ashes on their heads; sometimes voluntarily submitting to corporal punishment; and at other times they bent in a supplicant attitude as the faithful assembled for worship, begging for their forgiveness and prayers. Other penances were less severe. But in most cases, before being finally received back into the Church, or to full Communion, after they had performed their

penance, confession of their sin was to be made publicly before the faithful, and an assurance given that they steadfastly resolved, by God's grace, never to commit the like offence again.

Penance was not then regarded as a meritorious act, but rather as a sign of having fallen, and as a treatment necessary for the cure of the offender's soul; as an outward manifestation, too, that he was sensible of his sins, and the danger he was in; that he desired forgiveness, and sought to be received back again to the favour of God, and to the former privileges which he enjoyed in the Church. Great strictness and severity was observed in carrying out this discipline of the Church; and even the highest in the land were not exempt from submission to it, if they desired to be treated and received as members among the faithful. After the time of Constantine, when Kings and Emperors earnestly sought to be members of the Church, as one of the greatest blessings they could possess, we have an instance of this salutary treatment being applied to one of them; which it may be well to narrate.

The Emperor Theodosius, about A.D. 390, had become so enraged against the revolt of the people of Thessalonica, that he had secretly given orders to have a large number of them massacred. And this he had done after he had promised to pardon them on certain conditions, at the intercession of Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan. Nearly seven thousand were thus indiscriminately butchered. And when the Bishop

heard of it, he was sorely distressed, and wrote to the Emperor, as to the great heinousness of his offence, and the more so that he had professed to be a Christian: and exhorting him to repentance, he declared that until due penance had been made the Emperor was forbidden to come to, or even appear at, the Holy Communion. "The letter had its effect in convincing Theodosius of the guilt he had incurred by allowing this treacherous barbarity to take place, and he expressed his sorrow for what he had done. But this was not enough for St. Ambrose. As Theodosius was about to enter the Portian Church, the archbishop met him in the porch; laying hold of his robe, he desired him to withdraw, as a man polluted with blood: and when the Emperor spoke of his contrition, Ambrose told him that private regrets were insufficient to expiate so grievous a wrong. Theodosius submitted and retired. For eight months he remained in penitential seclusion, laying aside all his imperial ornaments, until at the Christmas season he presented himself before the Archbishop, and humbly entreated re-admission into the Church. St. Ambrose required, as a condition of his granting this, that some practical fruit of repentance should be shown: and the Emperor consented to issue a law, by which, in order to guard against the effects of sudden anger, the execution of all capital punishments was to be deferred until thirty days after the sentence. Having thus gained the privilege of re-admission into the communion of the faithful, Theodosius, upon

being allowed to enter the Church, prostrated himself on the pavement with every demonstration of the deepest grief and humiliation. And St. Ambrose afterwards, in his funeral oration over the Emperor, assures us, that 'from time to time, he never passed a day without recalling to mind the crime into which he had been betrayed by his passion.'" (See Robertson Chris: Ch: Vol. 1. 391.) We must not class this example in the same category with Hildibrand's (Pope Gregory VII.) treatment of Henry IV., Emperor of Germany; as the merits of the case are widely different. For long before this the authority of the Church was much abused, and some powerful restraint was needed for its right use.

This penitential Discipline, to which we have adverted, exercised a very salutary influence. First, it tended to preserve *the purity* of the Church in a special degree. For, when wicked men were retained in the Church, it subverted the very object for which she was founded by our Blessed Lord; it sullied the fair robe with which it was adorned, and dishonoured Christ her Head. Hence, notwithstanding the irregularities and sins that would arise from time to time, they were only exceptional, and what might naturally happen, in some departing from grace given, in spite of the protests and condemnation of them by the Church. But as far as in her power lay she was determined not only to discountenance and put down all vice and error, but to purge herself of all offenders, until fairly assured of their sincere contrition and

earnest resolution to lead a new life. She was called in her creed "the Holy Catholic Church;" and the unfeigned desire and efforts of all her true members were, that she might be as a Holy Temple sacred to the Lord, in which nothing that defileth or maketh a lie should be suffered to enter or remain; that having been sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word, Christ might present it to Himself "a glorious Church," not in name only, but in deed and in truth, as far as the corruption of our fallen nature would permit—"not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." It is a time to look back to with great veneration; for never since has the Church looked fairer, wrought more the work of Christ in the world, and appeared as His bride should do, adorned with the beauty of holiness.

Secondly, this penitential discipline was exercised, not for the sake of showing or boasting of the Church's power, but for the welfare of individual sinners, that they "might be saved in the day of the Lord." Their sins and negligences must be brought home to them; they must be made conscious that they were not living as they ought to do; that they were falling from their high estate, into the snare, and fell power of the Devil, from which they should be recovered. The Church would not suffer them to go on without remonstrance; and being banished for a time from her communion, they were led to compunction of soul and true repentance, and to seek to

purge themselves of the evil they had committed, and by faith wash themselves afresh in the fountain opened for all uncleanness. Thus awakened to their peril and danger, they were willing to submit to such medicinal remedies for the cure of their souls, as those who had the care of them prescribed. And those who read the accounts of the Primitive Christians will find that very many were recovered thereby, who would otherwise, peradventure, have been lost.

Thirdly, it had a deterring influence upon others within the Church. Numbers, admonished by the example of those who had to perform penance, were "the more afraid to offend," and willing to amend. All men being inclined to sin, more or less; those who were members of the Church were constrained not only by the love of Christ, but by the outward discipline to obedience in the faith and righteousness of life. The love of Christ alone should constrain His followers to continue in holiness, but through the weakness of their mortal nature, they were not always able to stand upright. Hence some restraining, corrective, and remedial force was needful and essential. The Church was, then, not only everywhere the spiritual home for the Faithful, but the school of Christ, wherein they were to learn what to believe, and how they were to live for their souls' health. It was strictly, in those early days of Christianity, an educational and disciplinary system of training for immortality: the Life of Christ was their lesson

book; they were taught to follow His example; and to obey His instructions: they were not only taught to know and understand all that Christ had told them, and what His precepts were, but to practice them, and to live by their faith. And if they were lax in this, if they became careless and indifferent, they were reprov'd. And unless they were willing to reform, the Church would not have them within her borders; not only because they were living contrary to the will of Christ, and bringing disgrace upon their holy profession, but because, if they had been retained, they would have corrupted others, and brought in a much lower standard of godliness. The result of this training and discipline was, that the members of the Church were made more like unto Christ their Lord, than they would otherwise have been, and a higher level in the Christian life was attained. They were being gradually changed into better men; learning all the virtues and graces of the Christian religion; and, animated by their faith, they "adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour, in all things."

Fourthly, then the world without was sensibly impressed by the sight. Men were not slow to notice the behaviour of those who belonged to the Church, as we have shown, and to see that it was a state of society far above that of the world around them; that men were not only made better men, more to be trusted, irreproachable in their behaviour, good citizens in every way, kind and charitable, but they

observed in them a joy and a blessed hope, of which, though they knew not the happy secret, they nevertheless saw lifted them up above the world and all it had to offer; above the cares and trials of life; for they were living a heavenly life on earth, and living with the grand hope of getting to heaven hereafter, through their Lord who loved them. Because their lives were a standing reproof to the world around, multitudes of those who believed not chafed at it, and seemed ready to gnash upon them with their teeth, and hence arose those constant persecutions. But there were others, as good evidence testifies, attracted by the sight,—by the beauty, the dignity, the worth, and the influence of holiness so manifested by those belonging to the Church, that they instinctively longed to be of the number; they would think about it, and make inquiries; they would feel what a privilege it would be if they could join the Church; they had a persuasion within them, that if they could but be received within her fold, they would somehow get supernatural help to withstand their besetting sins, which they hated and would gladly overcome, and that they would then, also, be in the way of happiness and the attainment of Everlasting Life. Hence they were drawn to the Church of Christ, and numbers were thereby gathered into her fold.

Thus the Unity of the Church was early inculcated and greatly upheld by the careful tuition, preparation for admission, and still more by the

discipline which was exercised among the Primitive Christians. If some real Unity like this had not existed among the Primitive Christians, we should have much the same state of things as we have now, the same evils appearing, or perhaps worse. The teachers and leaders of divisions, anxious to gain adherents and to promote the increase of their respective communities, would have hardly dare to speak a word of reproof when needed to their members, lest they should take themselves off, much less "rebuke them sharply" when they sinned, or use some salutary correction or discipline for their souls' good. For what do we see *now*, owing to this want of Unity among Christians, but almost a paralysis of discipline. A faithful minister of religion is afraid even to attempt it, or make any effort after it for the good of his flock; so that professing Christians are left too much to live as they like, and are not helped up to a higher level of Christianity, except it be that they take heed to the usual pulpit exhortations.

And there are worse consequences than this: numbers are becoming altogether indifferent to the Christian life, hardly attaching themselves to any Christian body; yet nominally Christians; and the number of them is daily increasing, who would be offended if they were told that they were not really Christians; and yet they have fallen away so far that they have almost entirely forsaken the assembling themselves together with any of the Lord's people, when they meet for the worship of God. Nay, what is worse; many of

them are suffered to live in abominable wickedness without correction or remonstrance, or fear of being disowned by other Christians. If, however, the Unity of Christians had been in any efficient manner preserved, some more thorough system of training and discipline would have been effected as of old. The faithful Christians living in any town or neighbourhood would not have tolerated the conduct of those who among them were living contrary to their holy profession. They would have brought the behaviour of the evil-doers, or neglecters of the Christian religion to the notice of their appointed minister, who would have spoken to these erring or careless brethren, and privately urged them to amendment of life, and who would have been supported, in his account of them to the Bishop, if his admonitions had been unavailing; while the Bishop would also have been supported in the exercise of discipline, or even in turning them out of the Church, as at the beginning, if necessary.

But how came it that this careful training and discipline in the early Church acquired such a power that men took heed of it, and in general submitted cheerfully to it? Whence did its authority and force spring? What led men to pay such attention to it, when, naturally, they would like to have had their own way, and be let alone? It was this: that the power and authority for the exercise of it was derived from Christ and His Apostles. And all the Primitive Christians were aware of this; it was part of the preaching of the Gospel which they had received,

that Christ had given power to His Apostles—which they were to hand on to other faithful men—to exercise this authority in the Church. Their holy writings, containing the revealed will of God, made this known to them; and they, therefore, recognised the necessity and administration of training and discipline, as well as the ordinances of Baptism and the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, as *of divine appointment*, and must therefore be gladly accepted. Christ had ordained both one and the other, for the strengthening and preserving not only of individual souls, but also for maintaining purity, obedience, and Unity among Christians: hence, as true Christians, it was their duty to pay due regard to all that the Lord had ordained for their welfare, and for the integrity and development of His Kingdom upon earth. Besides which, the Church being one, those who offended, felt, that if they did not submit to the righteous discipline thereof, they might be entirely excluded from her Communion, and be regarded but as heathens, for there was no other part of the Church, no other real Christian community, into which they could be received: and therefore the consequences of disregarding the admonitions of those who were over them in the Lord, were the more fearful to contemplate, carrying with it certain penalty, if not the dread of future damnation. Hence they were the more careful not to offend, the more ready to receive correction when needful, and even to submit to necessary discipline when justly inflicted.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE DEFINITE AND SETTLED FORM OF GOVERNMENT ESSENTIAL TO ABIDING UNITY.

GREATER attention would have been paid to the example of the Primitive Christians, and their conduct would have formed a safe guide and pattern for us to follow, if it had not been that the principles and necessary conditions of true Christian Unity seem to be sadly overlooked, misunderstood, or grossly neglected: and as a consequence we have these miserable divisions and dissensions, which are so hurtful and such a disgrace to our Christianity. We must consider, then, for awhile, what are the necessary conditions of unity, and the principles upon which it can alone effectually exist. They had better be stated at once. They are these:—That Christians everywhere should live under one and the same rule or government, and steadfastly abide by one and the same constitution, as laid down at the beginning, *i.e.*, on “the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone.” And in considering this most important question, we must bring a little of the common sense God has given us to bear upon it.

Most of those who are connected with dissentient bodies are quick and sensible enough to perceive the necessity and value of these principles, to which I allude, in the abstract, in their several communities,

be they large or small; but they seem sadly unconcerned or oblivious to the necessity and value of them in relation to the Kingdom of Christ, or to Christianity as a whole. And yet it is a matter of vital importance; and much concerns our maintaining one of the most prominent doctrines of the Gospel—the very subject of our inquiry—the *true unity of Christians*, which our Divine Redeemer so impressively desired for all those who would be His in truth, and which He strikingly illustrated in a variety of ways.

And some Christians, though they believe much of what is told them, do not seem to grasp the full Gospel of Christ as they should do—they do not take the whole of the New Testament truth, as the standard of their religion, if they confine their efforts for unity only to their own separate circle, or divided body of Christians, and do not act upon that large and comprehensive Gospel principle which should embrace the whole of Christ's followers. It is not in inventing other ways of doing this, and being content with the appearance or pretence of being united to all; but in adopting the plan, the visible working scheme, originated and set forth by those through whom the Scriptures themselves were written, and as the outcome and life of those Scriptures; for our belief in them is tested by our living in accordance with them. For we contend that the various bodies take a narrow selfish view of Christian Unity, by limiting it to themselves, or to their own community; which, in truth, is to overthrow and set aside

Christ's will and Christ's way, and that principle of action, whereby alone we can attain the real and sure basis of true Christian unity. There is more in this point than Christians usually imagine.

It is the diverging point from which our unhappy divisions and strifes arise. If we do not take the exact road, intimated and pointed out to us by Christ and His Apostles, in the first instance, we are sure to get wrong, even though we think it a little matter, and fancy that our own way, which seems right to us, will lead to the the same end. For it is just because some Christians do not take heed to enter upon the way *as* pointed out to them, as well as diligently and carefully to walk therein afterwards, according to the instructions given to them, that they are so led astray, and that so many differences appear, so that any real unity is next to impossible. And we come far short of being such Christians as Christ would have us to be, unless we faithfully seek to be such *in Christ's way*, and carefully act as He tells us, and according to the lines sufficiently indicated by those whom He appointed to carry out His design.

Would any of the Dissenting bodies allow some other kind of government, or some other kind of constitution to be set up within their several Societies or Unions, different to that which had been laid down, and under which they have lived, and by which they have acted? Certainly not! For sooner or later the two order of things would be sure to clash; and

those who clave to the old order would soon come into open conflict with those who had introduced the new. And so much do they all see *the necessity of abiding by one and the same Government, and the same Constitution*, which have been formerly accepted by them, severally; and that no real unity can exist among them, where a mixed Government or Constitution is allowed, that they will not tolerate among them any essential divergency; for they are keen enough to perceive that sooner or later a fresh division and separation must ensue, and another differing body must arise. Therefore they steadily set their faces against any other rule or system but *the one* which has been adopted, as far as they themselves, as a religious body, are concerned.

Carry this argument a little further back, to the beginning of the Christian religion, and you will soon perceive that what applies to any one section, applies to the whole; and that if any real basis of true Christian Unity is to exist among all the followers of Christ, there is nothing for it, but that all must conform to one definite certain kind of government, and abide by the one and the same Constitution which has been given to them; or there is little hope that there can be any true permanent unity. And there can be little doubt but that the Church polity which the Primitive Christians had received, and upon which they acted, was formed for the very express purpose of keeping all Christians united together as one entire body. This, at least, was their belief; and

they were the more careful that nothing should be done to weaken or destroy the unity which they enjoyed: and therefore they zealously endeavoured, according to St. Paul's admonition, "to keep the Unity of Spirit in the bond of peace." And it was because they did this, and "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in the breaking of the Bread, and in Prayers," that Christianity became such a power in the world: that she presented such a compact and unbroken front to all assaults and persecutions it had to encounter, as we have shown, and finally triumphed.

How well is the principle of unity understood in the affairs of life, and the conditions necessary for its preservation not only attended to, but enforced. What nation or kingdom in the world would allow a dual government to exercise authority within her territory, or permit two different kinds of constitution to be acted upon? They know that disorganisation and disruption would speedily ensue, and they would soon be landed in all the horrors of a civil war: brother lifting up his hand against brother, and all the terrible and untold misery that accompanies it: and therefore they resolutely keep down any attempt at division of authority or allowing an *imperium in imperio*. As a nation, those who govern know how essential it is for its peace and prosperity that by all means the people should be one and united: and know, too, that the power and influence of their country among the nations of the world depend upon this. And therefore they

will not suffer any other rule over the people but that which has been adopted and accepted. They not only strongly condemn any other rule as independent of what exists, that is opposed to it, and count it rebellion, but they will send forth their soldiers to put it down by force of arms, if need be, and visit those who take the lead in such factious seditions with condign punishment. It is not so much a matter of importance what kind of government or constitution they have—whether it be a despotic Monarchy, an Oligarchy, a Republican, or a mixed government like our own—of course, we may consider one much better than another—but it is a vital necessity, that whatever constitution or kind of government a people have, it should be strenuously upheld, and not be interfered with, or weakened by factions and divisions. All must agree to support *the one* they have, and loyally strive to maintain it; and this even though many think they would be better under another order of things, and would have it otherwise; and though some few would venture to spread dissatisfaction abroad among the people, yet is it considered so important, and in the highest degree essential for the welfare of the nation as a whole, that the dissentients and rebellious are constrained and compelled by outward force, if not by public opinion, to obey and submit to *the* existing government, which has been appointed to rule, according to the acknowledged constitution of the kingdom: and so it is that the existing government will not allow any other power to compete or intermeddle with, or be

put in opposition to, their authority, because they know how much their own power would be weakened, and be continually defied and set at naught, so that it would soon become almost impossible to govern the country; at least, as it ought to be, so that its best interests were promoted and protected.

And so, though no outward force is or should be used, to compel men to support, and yield obedience to, any constituted government in Christ's Kingdom, because it is not of this world, and must not fight with carnal weapons, yet, if it can be shown that a certain kind of government has been constitutionally appointed, *i.e.*, by those who had authority to give to it a constitution, then unquestionably it is the duty of every true subject of that Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour to give a ready and glad obedience to those in authority, when they administer its affairs in accordance with the fundamental laws of its constitution. Once be assured that a definite and distinct order for the government of Christ's Kingdom upon earth has been established by those who were lawfully commissioned to do this, and there ought not to be the least hesitation in accepting it; even moral persuasion ought not to be needed in such a case, for every true-hearted Christian should only be too anxious to give in his adherence to it, and promote it to the utmost of his power. Loyalty and love to his Lord and Saviour ought to prompt him to this. But, what I here would particularly insist upon, as a further momentous reason is, that it is so essential to the

preservation of true Christian unity, that I do not see how it can permanently exist without a faithful adhesion to the one and the same kind of government that has come down to us from the beginning of Christianity. All other schemes or attempts at union in the Kingdom of Christ are comparatively worthless, will often be fraught with serious consequences, and the results will be sure sooner or later to come to nought. Every Christian ought, then, to be fully persuaded in his own mind that there can be no true Christian unity, unless the people of the Lord are willing of their own accord cheerfully to acknowledge one definite and well defined authority, and be ready to be ordered and directed by it, so as to fall in faithfully with the constitution received of old: each endeavouring in his own little corner of the world to do his part in upholding the unity of Christ's mystical body, of which he has become a member.

This is the very essence of unity: it is a condition of things which cannot be dispensed with, if we are ever to attain to anything like unity: and without this unity Christianity will never be enabled to do its work in the world as it should do, and as it was designed to do by its great Head and Founder. How can a number of lesser unions, each having different kinds of authority and rule, independent of each other, loving to have, and resolving to have, their own way of following and advancing Christianity, acting of their own accord, without submission to any higher combined rule and authority appointed to govern the

whole—how can they as Christians do the work they were designed to do, as a compact body, as a united army of God's people should do? How is it likely that they can, separately following their own ways, so successfully or so efficiently do the Lord's work and fight the Lord's battle against the evil that is around them, and in the world, as they could if they as Christians were one people—a united body, as the Lord prayed that they might be.

Think of what it would be in the Army or Navy, if such a state of things were allowed. There could be no real order maintained, no combined action undertaken: the several independent divisions might each look well enough when they paraded before the public; and altogether the people might think they had a large force to meet the enemy; but let these separate bodies of soldiers, or sailors—disowning any higher authority or command, than what they severally possessed, in having petty leaders of their own choice among themselves—but once encounter the enemy, and how speedily would they be overcome, and routed: they would soon find themselves utterly unable to withstand the attack of a combined and well disciplined force. And even in times of peace what confusion and quarrelling there would be, if any one were allowed to be an officer in the army who thought he could lead or discipline our soldiers, better than those duly appointed by authority; and should insist upon having his full liberty to do as he liked, untrammelled by any higher command; or were

permitted to adopt some other system different from what was laid down! Disputes and conflicts would naturally continually arise.

And if the soldiers were allowed their liberty also to choose their own officers, or to adopt whatever system they liked, how soon would any kind of order and discipline be relaxed, any attempt at it be in vain: the strength of the force would be sensibly diminished, and insubordination become rampant. The men would be continually wanting to have their own way; and would not, at all times, be inclined to obey the word of command. And if threatened with punishment or dismissal, or, if they did not like some of the regulations and orders given to them, would in their turn threaten to join one of the other irregular bodies of soldiers: and thus pleasing themselves would soon overthrow all authority and rule. Any one with even a little common sense, would at once see that this kind of liberty either in the Army or Navy would never do. It would be ruinous; and defeat the very object for which we had an Army or Navy at all; for to be successful and powerful, it must be evident to all who can think about it, even in a little degree, that a proper subordination to authority must be observed in all ranks, and by all and every one, whatever his position might be, so that a high state of discipline and ready obedience be exacted and maintained.

And so also in any large Mercantile establishment, which has branches all over the country; or take the

example of a Railway Company; we can plainly enough perceive how necessary it is for the success of one or the other of these undertakings that there should be only *one* supreme command or authority, under which all the heads of departments and others employed should perform their duties, and to whose direction they should submit; and that there should be no difference of authority in the same establishment or company. Take the latter case for a moment's consideration. There are three or four classes of men engaged in carrying on the business of a Railway. First: the Board of Directors with a Chairman: secondly, the principal officials and station-masters, who must be men of some ability and acuteness; then, thirdly, there are the various workmen on the line, and the porters, which form a large body. Now, imagine what confusion and disorder would continually arise, and ultimately mar the prosperity of the company, if the latter body of men, for instance, were to insist upon having a superintendent of their own choosing, and do their work as they thought best. They might reason—"We are by far the largest body of men concerned in the work of the company, and it could not go on without us: therefore we ought to have a voice in carrying out the work we have to do." Or the second class—the leading officials and station-masters, might say, "We really have to transact the business of the railway, and therefore we demand to exercise our own discretion and views, in the orders we give." But if this were allowed, in either case,

would not things soon come to a dead lock? Would not disturbances continually take place, irregularities arise, sad accidents, and a strange medley of affairs ensue, if, when the Directors ordered one thing, the leading officials or station-masters were severally to give other directions which they might think would be better? Or, if the workmen and porters should decide among themselves to pursue some other course different to the orders they had received? Such proceedings, you may be sure, would never answer: the company would be sure to suffer greatly.

Therefore it is necessary that even the voice of the Directors themselves should be one. The members of the Board must not be allowed severally or individually to take upon themselves to give orders independently of the others. They must consult together, decide upon what is best to be done; in short they must be *unanimous*, or take the opinion of the majority, and then, through their Chairman, or by one deputed by them all, convey definite orders to their several officers and subordinates; and see that those orders are implicitly obeyed and carried out. It is, then, by this method of unity of action that they can hope to succeed—that in spite of an infinite number of arrangements, things are made to run so smoothly, and the undertaking is made to prove profitable. The value of having, then, only one definite form of administration or government is so well understood by these able business men that they will not suffer any interference or dictation from any

of the other classes of men employed in the company : so much so that an act of wilful disobedience is sure to bring about a speedy dismissal. For their common sense and daily experience teach them that only by their direction being one, and their orders going forth as the ruling of the Board, can the various workings of their large undertaking go on at all satisfactorily and prove advantageous. And even the great value of this principle of government, the heads of departments, and the various kinds of workmen as well, are sensible enough to perceive to be essentially necessary to the well-being of the Company, whereby they gain their livelihood, that they readily yield obedience to the orders that have come from head quarters, and try to carry them out faithfully to the best of their ability.

These illustrations will help any one, who will use a little reflection, to see how disadvantageous the divisions and dissensions which prevail, are to the furtherance of the Christian religion ; and afford a sufficient reason why Christianity is so enfeebled and unable to do the work in the world that it ought to do, and is expected of it. And on the other hand, it teaches us all the essential value of union, and how powerful for good in the world Christianity would be if it were one compact body, everywhere under one and the same rule, where proper discipline and order might in some measure be maintained.

The great worth of unity is acknowledged even in voluntary associations, as well as in larger bodies :

the proverbial axiom that "union is strength," shews this; nor is it to be supposed that any one is against it. Why is Christianity to be deprived of its strength, then, in this respect? Have not Christians much to blame themselves for, in this loss of power; especially those who in any wise contribute to, join in and uphold, the principle or ways that lead to discord and separation? Should not every one, who names the name of Christ, and places himself in any wise under His banner, seeing the great necessity that there is for true Christian unity, as well as seeing that it is the will of the Lord—which should be continually before us—do something, nay, all that it is in his power to promote and uphold it?

Nor is it any valid excuse, and such as will be allowed, to say that Christianity is now so much broken up and divided, that it is almost impossible to observe such a rule, and that instead thereof, the principle of religious liberty must be observed: for there is still a basis of Christian unity in existence, however much it has been discarded, or lost sight of amid the confusion that prevails; the very system of government for the preservation of unity in the Church of Christ is still amongst us, which every true follower of the Lord should diligently seek after and hold by. And though we cannot, or must not expect, altogether to do away with the disorder and dissension that prevail, we shall in our measure be able to do something to lessen the evil; and, as far as we are individually concerned, we shall be furthering, in our

humble degree, the earnest desire of our Saviour, which will be all the more acceptable because of the temptations which abound to set aside and count it as nothing. For if the means ordained of old for the preservation of that unity in His Church which Christ pleaded for, is conscientiously accepted and clung to, the Lord will regard it as an honest and sincere endeavour on our part to conform ourselves severally to His great Will and Design for the maintenance of unity. It will be acceptable in His sight: and He will be ready to say unto those who faithfully and humbly abide by the ancient basis of unity: "for as much as ye have done it in furtherance of the purpose I had in My heart respecting My people being one, ye have done it unto Me."

This unity which prevailed so largely among the Primitive Christians, was a principle to which they all paid great attention; though it is now so little accounted of by many. It was not only because they recognised it as so essential to their very existence, as it seemed, when they had the whole world against them, striving "to stamp out" the religion of Christ, that Christians should everywhere be one people, and cling together; but because they especially regarded it as the expressed wish and earnest desire of the Lord Jesus, that they should be "one" and be visibly known as such by the world around them. They were not stiff in their own conceits, but were subservient to those in authority. Whatever they did, however religious they were,

they felt constrained from love and obedience to Christ to continue in the unity of His Church: and this they could only do by holding to, and conforming themselves to, the one and the same government that had been ordained for them all from the beginning, which had come down to them, and was in their very midst, and through which they had been made Christians and received into the body. Hence they abjured all other kinds of government for the Church, however specious, however apparently full of zeal, and aiming at a holier life.

The government of the Church in those days—immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, up to the time of Constantine—must have been one and the same everywhere, or the unity so openly and widely manifested would never have existed, considering the many disadvantageous conditions under which it was exercised. The government of the Church to which the Christians adhered, and to which they had pledged submission was not one that they had created or chosen by themselves: it was one that had been given to them, and which they had gladly received, when one by one they were admitted into the body, and became subject to its guidance and instruction. To desire, or to set up, some other government than that they had received was but to prove that they were, indeed, disloyal, unfaithful men.

The Primitive Christians regarded this government that existed in the Church as bequeathed to them by Christ and His Apostles, and for the very purpose of

preserving unity among them, as well as the instrument whereby they were to be trained for the Christian life when obedient to its instructions. Those who came after the Apostles and first teachers of the Gospel received this government from them, carried it on and maintained it in its efficiency, and then in turn handed it on unimpaired and inviolate to those who followed. Hence it was in those early days received by the Christians, and guarded as a government divinely appointed for the Church. The Scriptures which they received, and which we also accept as divinely inspired, bore testimony to this, gave unmistakeable evidence of some such government, and that there was not more than this *one government* inaugurated by the Apostles of Christ.

And though those to whom the authority in this government of the Church was bequeathed had to make further arrangements to meet the exigences of events—the astonishing increase in numbers and its extension to distant parts, adapting the Church to its requirements, settling differences that arose, and decreeing fresh ordinances from time to time for the further preservation of order, the unity of the body, and the purity of the Faith; still they scrupulously kept to the same lines as had originally been laid down and received by them: the essential and fundamental principles and character of the Constitution were strictly observed; and no departure from them was permitted. If any attempt were made to infringe upon them, or disregard the ordinances upon which the

foundation of their government had been established, it was the duty and charge of one and all to stand up for them, and resist any encroachment or violation.

This unity and maintenance of government in the Church had especial reference to three things. First, that none should be recognised as having any part in the government of the Church, but those who could show that they had been duly appointed to the office by those who had authority in the Church; so that they could all severally prove that they had rightly received the power of ruling from those who could trace up their spiritual lineage to the Apostles: for it was only by virtue of the power given by Christ to His Apostles, that they exercised their sacred functions. And this was the more needful because the heretics and schismatics, acknowledging the virtue and authority of the Episcopate, constituted Bishops among themselves; and it was only by having recourse to this rule or principle, that the faithful were able to distinguish who were rightful rulers, having authority, and which congregations rightly belonged to the Church of Christ, and which did not; for only such assemblies of Christians were acknowledged as truly attached to Christ's Church who had a minister approved and appointed by the Bishop, who had been lawfully ordained to that portion of the Church.

Secondly, they must uphold and abide by those rules, or the order appointed of old in the Church for the preservation of unity among themselves. One

minister was not to interfere with the congregation or district of another ; just as one Bishop was forbidden to meddle in the Diocese that belonged to another, unless there was some good cause, as in cases specified, and then in conjunction with neighbouring Bishops. For another portion of the order existing in the Church was, that neighbouring Bishops should meet together constantly to consult for the welfare of the Church, to correct what was wrong, to settle differences, and further any good undertaking. And by this means, constant cognizance could be taken of any error, any neglect of duty or wrong doing, and some regular and authoritative action taken.

Thirdly, great vigilance was exercised lest the Faith of the Church should be tampered with or adulterated. No new doctrine, or new view of any existing doctrine which the Church had not received, or witnessed to, could be allowed or suffered to be taught in any part of the Church. The Faith was one and the same for all, and all must contend for it. Nothing must be received by any congregation, or taught to them as necessary to salvation, but what could be proved to be Scriptural, and had received the sanction of the Church. The Church frequently assembled in Council, and condemned heretical doctrines ; and those who had taught them or advocated them must renounce their error, or they were to be cut off from the Church.

Great attention were paid to these fundamental rules, and it was the more needful that stringent

measures should be taken to uphold them; for if the Arian, Macedonian, Eutychian, or Nestorian heresies had been taught in the Church, what uncertainty would have prevailed as to what we must believe: the Church was greatly troubled about them, and she had to contend for the true faith with unceasing fortitude. The great Athanasius and others stood forward boldly in defence of the faith. And the Church having after due consideration forbidden these several errors, further defined the Faith, and gave fuller explanation of it on those points where it had been corrupted. So also did the Church restrain the rulers from going beyond their appointed jurisdiction, and causing confusion in the Church by their ambitious designs. And so also did the Church strictly maintain the rightful succession of Bishops in all places where her dominion extended.

Nor was it considered sufficient, that, while a Church or Bishop had received the rightful succession from the Apostles, one or the other could allow or teach any other doctrine than that which had been already sanctioned in the Church, as found in Scripture, or agreeable to the same; or, that they were at liberty to transgress the rules which secured the rightful independence of other Churches, whenever an opportunity presented itself of gaining an ascendancy over them. Such a thing as Bishops sending their Clergy into the Diocese of another, to set up an independent authority, or to gather other assemblies for worship without the authority of the rightful

Bishop ; or in promulgating doctrines even in their own Dioceses or Provinces, which had not been received from the beginning, and could be found in Scripture, subjected them not only to severe censure, but made them liable to be excommunicated from the whole Church, unless they reformed their ways and public teaching.

Another important matter recognised in the government of the Church by the early Christians was, that Christ was still their only supreme Head and King, though withdrawn from their sight, and seated on the throne of His Majesty on High. They firmly believed that all authority came from Him, originally, and was carried on in His name: and that He really, to all intents and purposes, must ever remain the Head of the Church till the end, when "He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father: for He must reign until He, hath put all enemies under His feet." The Papacy of the Church of Rome had, therefore, no place in the government that existed among the Primitive Christians. It was only first claimed and set up at the beginning of the seventh century, as history will show, though that See had for a long time been assuming authority, and gaining an ascendancy over other Churches. But the very principle or rule of having a visible supreme Head was excluded in the government of the Church by Christ and His Apostles. And if not admitted then, if the Primitive Christians knew nothing of such a rule, and could do very well without it,

what warrant is there, what need is there for establishing it now? They knew well, as we, too, should do, that Christ left the ordering and government of His Church in the hands of the Apostles, a body of men chosen by Himself: that they were united among themselves, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost as the first ruling body; that others were appointed to join them; and the number of rulers were to be increased according to the increasing necessities of the Church. All this is intimated and confirmed in the Scriptures. But that the government of the whole Church was to be reduced to one visible human head, would appear to be the very furthest thing from the Apostles' thoughts. It was not only unauthorised, but was contrary to the government which Christ and His Apostles had established; in short, it was little less than usurping the Sovereignty of Christ, and thrusting a fallible creature into the place which He alone should occupy.

But if the government of Christ's Church was not to be left in the hands of one man, much less was it left in the hands of the people, or in the hands of the Presbyters, or general body of Ministers, or in the hands of the several Congregations that had been formed, so that they could act independently by themselves. Government through such means would certainly not be conducive to unity of the body, if we may judge by experience. But it is sufficient to say that such kinds of government were not established by Christ and His Apostles. No

sufficient proof can be advanced that they ever existed. Some of the ablest and most learned arguments that have been produced in favour of them, have been carefully examined, and will be alluded to before the close of this inquiry; but they are chiefly suppositions, and the views and opinions have evidently been drawn and formed from the experience of the present times, and the state of things in their different Communities, and not from the evidence taken from early times: since such methods of rule are not to be found, or any trace of them, in the government of the Primitive Christians. They had but one form of Church government, that which the Apostles had given them, as a continuation of their own rule and authority.

There was no system of government in the Church at the beginning, answering to what is termed "Congregational," "Presbyterian," or "Independent." Nor was it left to Christians to adopt any kind of government they liked. One definite form of government was provided for them, and if they would not conform to it, they were not recognised as Christians. Anything like Nonconformity was not acknowledged in the Church of Christ. Else unity of the body would no more have existed then than it does now.

These forms of Church government, as it is well known, sprang up into existence and favour in the 16th and 17th centuries; and others have been springing up ever since. In the first instances, men had felt, especially abroad, that they could not

lawfully hold Communion with the Church, while under the domination of the Roman See, and be compelled to adopt superstitious practices, or assent to corrupt doctrines, which they could not believe in, and had not been required of the Primitive Christians. Therefore there seemed some justification for such separation. But what justification could there be for Christians to take such a course in this country, and wilfully break the unity of the Church which was so dear to Christ, when the Church had been reformed on the model of the Primitive Christians, and had purged herself from those Romish doctrines and ceremonies which had been vainly invented, and had no sure "warranty of Scripture?" One and all of these were apparently cutting themselves off from the Church of Christ, bringing confusion and uncertainty into the bonds of Christian unity; and none of the little differences for which they break this fellowship ordained by Christ and His Apostles, will excuse their grievous offence, or give them the right or authority to constitute themselves Churches of Christ, or even as being parts thereof. Detached bodies of Christians they may be regarded, and because they, in the main, hold most of the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith, and are otherwise loyal to Christ, and endeavour, in their way, to do him service and further His cause on earth, they may be esteemed, in a certain sense, as brethren; yet are they imperfectly so, because they hold back from true Communion with the Church, as received from Christ

and His Apostles, and set at nought the only basis of unity which has come down from them.

One form of government, as it has been shewn, was essentially necessary for the unity of the Church, as it is for the welfare of any great undertaking or kingdom. And one form of government was undoubtedly given to the early Christians, which they all heartily accepted, and gladly submitted to. And the great weight of historical evidence, starting with what is written in the Scriptures,—both as regards the will and design of Christ, and the actions and words of His Apostles in carrying out the instructions He gave them—including the works of the Ante-Nicene writers—which is evidence from the Primitive Christians themselves—all goes to prove in the fullest possible way, such as ought to satisfy all reasonable men who will sincerely examine it, that EPISCOPACY was alone the one form of government ordained of God, as the only means for maintaining order and unity in His Church.

The Apostles were undoubtedly the first Bishops of the Church. Though their jurisdiction was not territorially limited; still they ordained that it should be so in the main by those who succeeded them, of which sufficient indications are given. Theirs appeared almost universal. I say *almost*, because there are signs and records which shew that one Apostle did not intrude upon that portion of the world taken by another, or go beyond his measure or the line which belonged to another, to which allusion will hereafter

be made; so that though their range seemed unlimited, they still had their respective jurisdictions, which is the principle of the Diocesan system. But what is most important to notice is, that the Apostles certainly exercised Episcopal rule over all Churches: insomuch so that no congregation of Christians was ever acknowledged as belonging to the Church of Christ unless they had some Apostle or Bishop to whom they could look as their appointed ruler, and by whose counsel and advice they must be governed. And though Christ had given to the Apostles another and prior work, namely that of framing a Constitution for the Church, according to His instructions, whereby they themselves, their successors, and all Christian people were to be governed,—which duty or work could not necessarily devolve upon those who should come after them, since it was the laying of the foundation of the Church which was laid once for all—still the office and work of the Episcopacy was duly and fully exercised by the Apostles, and was by them also committed to faithful men, who were afterwards to take their place in governing the Church of Christ, according to the order which they had prescribed. So that the same order of things might be continued after them, as they had carried on. Hence there never was a time in the history of Primitive Christianity, when any congregation, or combination of congregations, was independent of some governor; there never was a time when the minister of a congregation, or a combination of such ministers,

were sufficient of themselves to belong to the Church, without the authority of their Bishop.

Thus it was that from the very beginning, even in the days of the Apostles, the Church or the body of Christians always lived under the government of the Episcopacy. It was through the Bishops that other ministers were ordained and received power to officiate as ministers in the Church: and no congregation of Christians could be found in the Church without having a Bishop over them as their ruler; and whose minister was not under the jurisdiction and control of the Bishop, who had the charge of that city, or part of the country. Though the Bishops who succeeded the Apostles were not charged with all that they had to do, for other foundation they could not lay than that which the Apostles had already laid, yet was it their duty while governing the Church in the place of the Apostles, to keep to the lines of the foundation or the Constitution originally laid down, and more fully delineated in records of early Christianity, and to see that that form of government which had been ordained for them was adhered to, and preserved inviolate by those committed to their charge; as well as to guard the Faith once for all delivered to the saints, and to see that it was taught in all its fulness and purity.

Those who thoroughly study and consider the evidence that exists, will perceive that no time could elapse for the intervention of any other system of government among Christians, than that which the

Apostles had introduced and ordained. Is it reasonable to think that they should have been at so much pains, and evidently given much time and consideration to laying the foundation of the Church, giving it a Constitution to preserve order and unity in the body, and have no purpose and intention, take no care, use not the proper and efficient means to have the same fully established and carried out? Might we not fairly conclude that they would take all necessary steps and measures to secure the stability of the government which they inaugurated? That they would see that the authority which the Lord had given them for this purpose, was properly and effectually handed on to others chosen by them to exercise the office of a Bishop in the Church of Christ?

Nor is it likely that those whom the Apostles had taught and trained, whom they had received into the Church, and under whose rule they had lived, and who were intimately acquainted with it, would immediately endeavour to overthrow it, and try to establish another kind of government and order in the Church, to which they had not been accustomed. The very attempt to do this on the part of a few would have created such a disturbance that it would be sure to leave some traces behind it. But of this there is none; so that it is very plain to any one who can think the matter clearly out, that the kind of government, and the Constitution and order of the Church which we find marked out in the annals of

the Primitive Christians, was just that, and none other, than what had been established by Christ and His Apostles.

The Episcopal government of the Church, then, as exercised by the Apostles, was duly and orderly transmitted to other responsible individuals without any break or intermission. Yea, even while some of the Apostles were alive, a few were called to be coadjutor Bishops; and before the last Apostle passed away, evidence is given that Bishops, as we now have them, were general in those places where the Church had become settled; and thus they fully exercised their authority under the very sanction of Apostolic approval. And as no other system is named, or, to all appearance, was allowed to interfere, the unity and order of the Church was upheld among the Primitive Christians in a remarkable degree; and became a notable example for the Church in succeeding generations, of the manner and means by which they were, amid all difficulties and trials, to preserve the same order and unity—namely, by the proper and efficient discharge of Episcopal government. This is a matter of fact; and can be attested by greater authority than any other statement of like antiquity, to be true.

In the next Chapter I intend to give an illucidation of the system of this Episcopal government, as to how it was carried on in those early times, the rules ordained for its efficient working, and how carefully it was guarded from being abused by those into whose hands the authority was delivered. Of the fact

itself, that the one government of the Church was Episcopacy, there could be little doubt. Though we are far from falling in with all the views and sentiments of Gibbon, the celebrated historian, for he had no particular liking for Christianity, yet as an impartial witness to the truth of history, we may conclude this Chapter with a passage from his work on the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, which will at once serve to convince not a few that the evidence for Episcopal government among the Early Christians is capable of being well substantiated. For after some remarks about the necessity of such an office or authority, he proceeds (Chap. xv. sec. 5.): "The advantages of this Episcopal form of government, which appears to have been introduced *before the end of the first Century*, were so obvious, and so important to the future greatness, as well as the present peace of Christianity, that it was adopted without delay by all the Societies which were already scattered over the Empire; had acquired in a very early period the sanction of antiquity, and is still revered by the most powerful Churches, both of the East and of the West, as a primitive and even as a *divine establishment*." And the more this fact of history is searched into the more we shall be confirmed in the truth of it.

CHAPTER VII.

EVIDENCE FROM THE APOSTOLICAL CANONS.

THAT there was a simple, well defined, well understood, and fully recognised government among the Primitive Christians, is witnessed to by many. There are those who exercised their ministrations immediately after the Apostles, who had been taught by them, trained and ordained, and eventually made Bishops by them; who knew well what the Apostles had settled in the Church, and the many general orders they had given for preserving the unity of the Church in all parts, and for carrying on the ministry most effectually, as ordained by Christ; and who had grown up, and become familiar with the organisation of the Church which the Apostles had constituted: and then, these who had immediately succeeded the Apostles taught others, and gave them to understand what the Lord Jesus willed and commanded to be done in reference to His Church, as they had heard it from the mouth of the Apostles themselves, who as a compact body had worked and agreed together as to all the most essential matters necessary to determine for its right government; and had moreover given them examples of the working of what was designed by the united body of the Apostles, in the Churches they planted.

So then, there were, without doubt, men well qualified to witness to the state of things, and the

definite kind of government that existed among the Primitive Christians; for they had not only learned all about the Constitution of the Church from the words of the Apostles, and those whom they had taught; but they had before their eyes specimens of what the Church was, as settled by the Apostles; and an acquaintance with the many forms and regulations which they had laid down for the administration of its affairs, not only in each particular Church, over which one of their Bishops had the rule, but in regard to the Church generally, whereby the whole Church was to be governed and preserved, and kept together as one body everywhere.

Various writers among the Primitive Christians, men of high esteem among them, many of whom laid down their lives for the truth of what they taught, afford us ample information about these particulars respecting the government of the Church. Such were Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who all three had been disciples of one or other of the Apostles, and had been made Bishops by them in various parts. To these are added the witness of Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, Justin Martyr the earlier Apologist, and Tertullian the later. Then we have Eusebius who, in his Ecclesiastical History gives many particulars of what actually took place; and the fragments of Hegesippus, an earlier historian. All these bear witness to the existence of the organisation of the Primitive Church, and the means by which the unity of the

body was upheld. We have sufficient evidence in the Holy Scripture that a Church *was founded* by Christ's instructions, and according to the design He gave to His Apostles; and we have many particulars to show the form and government of it: here we have the germ of it, the first outlines of the foundation; and if there be anything not clear to us, some points about which we differ and dispute, we must look to its further development, to the superstructure that was raised, when it had taken more definite shape, and began to shew how it grew up from the foundation the Apostles had laid. These matters we could not naturally expect to find in the Scriptures, but these men to whom we have alluded testify to these things, and as their testimony is to be depended upon, it is most valuable.

We do not purpose at present to give any evidence from these authors in support of these things, as there are other points to discuss; but hoping to do so more fully before we close this work, it will be sufficient for our purpose here, to adduce another kind of evidence, and confine ourselves to some short extracts from "the Apostolical Canons," which has particular reference to the government of the Church, as a sufficient proof of what it was, and how it was administered to secure the unity of the body, and efficient working of the system.

When speaking of "the Apostolical Canons," it must be understood that we do not bring them forward as having been written in their actual form

by the Apostles, but as the outcome of the fundamental rules and regulations which they instituted, and of the uniform directions which they gave for the future governance and order to be observed in the Church in all parts for the preservation of its peace and unity. They are in the main the ordinances received, and acted upon by the Primitive Church, and handed down to them as the instructions derived from the authority of the Apostles themselves, and were taken from the practices and injunctions then in exercise, in the firm persuasion that they could be traced up to the Apostles, or were in strict accordance with what they had enjoined upon those who were to govern the Church after them. It is, indeed, reasonable to suppose that they—the Apostles—would leave instructions behind them on all important matters of detail. Besides this, it is generally accounted by learned men, who have looked into the question, that these Apostolical Canons were, for the most part, written during the times of Primitive Christianity, since they were constantly referred to in guiding the rulers of the Church in their administration of her affairs and discipline.

Bishop Beveridge, who is of great authority on the ancient constitution of the Church—and from whose translation of the Greek Canons the following extracts are taken—affirms, that these Canons are certainly as old as the *conclusion of the second, or the beginning of the third Century*: and he comes to this conclusion, because he finds them quoted under different names

by the Councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Antioch, and Carthage: and seem to have been appealed to as authorities by Tertullian, Cyprian, Constantine the Great, Alexander, Patriarch of Alexandria, and the great St. Athanasius.

Bishop Pearson, also considers the Canons to have been added to from time to time during this early period, but that *in their collective form* they were in existence previous to the first General Council of Nice. (Vind. Ignat: Vol II. p. 295.)

The late Chevalier Bunsen, who has given some research and consideration to the question—witness his work on *Hippolytus and his Age*—looks upon them as of the highest moment, and is of opinion that the Canons belonged to a class of ordinances which were “the local *coutumes* of the Apostolic Church;” that is, that they were accepted in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, as being in accordance with the practice, rules, and arrangements laid down by them for the government of it, after their departure. The passages which are selected from this valuable and very ancient record, are such as have some direct reference to the particulars in the organization or constitution of the early Church, to which allusion has been made. Notice, for instance, the following:—

CANON I.—Let a Bishop be consecrated by two or three Bishops.

CANON II.—Let a Priest or Deacon, and the rest of the Clergy, be ordained by one Bishop.

CANON V.—Let not a Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, put away his wife on the pretext of religion: and if he should put her away let him be excommunicated.

CANON VIII.—If any Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, or any other of the Clergy, when the oblation is made, shall not communicate, let him give a reason for his conduct, and if his reason be a good one, let him be pardoned; but if he does not give a reason, let him be excommunicated.

CANON IX.—All the faithful, who have come into Church and heard the Scriptures, but remain not to the Prayers and the Holy Communion, ought to be excommunicated, as persons bringing disorder into the Church.

CANON XIV.—A Bishop may not leave his own Diocese, and go over to another, even though he be urged by many, unless there be some reasonable cause which compels him to do this, such as, that he is able to confer some great advantage upon them by his instruction in religion; and this he must do, not of his own accord, but upon the entreaty of many.

CANON XV.—If any Priest, or Deacon, or any other of the Clergy, should leave his own parish and go to another, and when he is gone, should continue there without the will of his Bishop,—we command this person not to minister, especially if when his Bishop exhorts him to return, he refuses; and if he remains obstinate, let him communicate as a layman.

CANON XXIX.—If any Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, shall attain to this dignity by the assistance of money, let him be deposed, and let him who ordained him be altogether excommunicated, even as Simon Magnus was, by me, Peter.

CANON XXXI.—If any Priest should despise his own Bishop, and collect hearers at another place, and raise another altar, when he can bring no accusation against his Bishop concerning religion or justice, let him be deposed as

being ambitious, for he is a tyrant ; so also the rest of the Clergy, and as many as unite themselves to him ; but let the laity be excommunicated : and let these things be done after the first, second, or third admonition of the Bishop.

CANON XXXII.—If any Priest, or Deacon, be excommunicated by his Bishop, he may not be re-admitted by any other but the one who excommunicated him, unless haply the Bishop be dead who excommunicated him.

CANON XXXIII.—No foreign Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, shall be received without letters commendatory : and if these are produced, let them be inquired into ; and if they be found to be preachers of righteousness, let them be received ; but if not, give them what is necessary, but receive them not into communion : for many things are done by stealth.

CANON XXXIV.—It is fit that the Bishops of every country should know who is chief among them, and consider him as their head, and do nothing of importance without his knowledge ; and that each should confine himself to his own Diocese and the parishes contained in it ; but let him not do anything without the knowledge of all, for thus there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father by the Lord, in the Holy Ghost—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

CANON XXXVII.—Let there be a Synod of Bishops twice every year, and let them examine among themselves the decrees of religion, and put an end to any ecclesiastical controversies which have arisen ; once in the fourth week of Pentecost, and once on the twelfth of October.

CANON XXXVIII.—Let the Bishop have the care of all ecclesiastical affairs, and let him administer them as if God were looking over him ; but let him not claim any of those things which are given to God to himself or for his own relations ; but if they be poor he may supply them as

poor men, but let him not, on this excuse, sell the property of the Church.

CANON XXXIX.—Let the Priests and Deacons do nothing without the knowledge of the Bishop, for he is the person to whose faith the Lord's people are intrusted, and of whom an account of their souls must be required.

CANON XLII.—Let the Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, who spends his time in dice or drunkenness, either cease from such conduct, or be deposed.

CANON LI.—If any Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, or any of the sacred order, shall restrain from marriage, and flesh, and wine, not from discipline, but from hatred of them, forgetting that they are all very good, and that God hath made them male and female, but shall blasphemously accuse the Creator, shall either be corrected or deposed, and cast out of the Church : so also of the laity.

CANON LXIV.—If any of the Clergy or Laity pray in the assembly of Jews or heretics, let him both be deposed and excommunicated.

CANON LXXIV.—If a Bishop be accused by any person worthy of credit, he is to be summoned by the Bishops, and if he come before them, and confess, or be convicted, let some punishment be appointed ; but if, when he is summoned, he does not obey, let him be summoned a second time, and two Bishops sent to him ; and if he obey not this, let him be summoned the third time, and two Bishops again sent to him ; and if he appear not then, through contempt, let the Synod pronounce what seems good against him, lest he should seem to make a gain by avoiding punishment.

No little labour and research have been expended upon *the Apostolical Canons*, relative to their genuineness and authenticity, their character and the use made of them in the early Church ; and half a page

might be filled with a list of the learned works which have been written upon them. Granting, as it has been before stated, that they are not written by the Apostles, any more than the Apostles' Creed; yet, as this latter is considered to contain the chief doctrines which the Apostles taught, and therefore acquired the title it bears: so the Apostolical Canons are believed to contain the most important instructions and regulations relative to the management of the Church as a Divine Society, as given in substance by the Apostles, and had consequently the name applied to them by which they are known. In this light it is proved from arguments that they are not spurious; and further, it is shown from direct external or historical evidence that they were received, collected, and noted down by credible men, who had the opportunity of ascertaining their genuineness, and could not, therefore, be forgeries.

Some question has been raised as to interpolations, and also as to the number, whether additions have not been made to the original number. As an instance of the former, it will be noticed that in Canon XXIX. the words "by me Peter" are added; and it is supposed that they must have been supplied by a later writer, who wanted to give greater weight and authority to them by having the Apostle's name attached in this case. But what if it be so? It is not an interpolation in the sense in which the term is usually applied, by giving to the text a meaning which did not belong to it, and thereby altering its

true character. For is it not recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that Simon Magnus was excommunicated by St. Peter; and what more likely but that when this injunction was given at the first, the Apostle might have added, or rather spoken, these words? It was at least the belief in those early days that he had; and if written down and received in the Church before A.D. 300, it can hardly be called an interpolation; at least not in the usual way in which the word is generally regarded. And as to the increase in the number of Canons, it is most probable, we confess, that additions were made from time to time, and that this was the course really taken in the collection of them. Indeed, it may be stated that at the first the Canons were fewer, and were not all made at one time; but added to, in the early Synods of the Bishops, and as occasion called them forth: hence a number of them would be written and acknowledged before some of the others, which were appended later, but still within the period specified.

And there seems no reason for doubting that some of the earlier ones were actually taken down from the Apostles' own lips, or from the mouth of one or other of them, as the rule ordained by them all, which they severally enjoined everywhere for the government and order of the Churches which they separately established. For, because the records of the latter portion of the lives of the Apostles and their labours, and indeed the entire lives and acts of some of them, are hardly mentioned at all, it is not

to be supposed that they did little or nothing, or said little or nothing, and settled little or nothing but what we read of; for the contrary is more likely; and though no lengthened and regular account is extant of what they said, and did, and settled, we may still firmly believe that they laboured incessantly; and everywhere laid down a uniform rule of action as agreed upon among themselves; and that these Apostolic Canons are, to a large extent, the result of their combined wisdom; and that, as necessity demanded, the Bishops in the Synods of the Primitive Church added others as most agreeable to the general injunctions of the Apostles as everywhere received; for, to use a phrase familiar to us, the Churches in different parts were accustomed to *compare notes*, and to be *in touch* with each other; and ascertained how such and such things—rites as well as doctrines and rules—had been received; and what was the way and custom with them, for the purpose, and with the idea of keeping up a uniformity throughout all her borders; so that, one part acting in union with another, as members in the one great body, they were able to come to the same conclusion on various points, to form a *consensus* of practices and views, respecting what they had severally received from the Apostles, and what had been enjoined by them, as to the ordering and regulation of their affairs, in the first instance: so that they might be *all one in Christ*, according to His grand design. This seems to have been the course pursued in

the early Church, as we may judge from the many scattered records that remain of what was said and done: and in the absence of more distinct information, it is the most rational way of accounting for this ancient and valuable code of laws and regulations on important matters; so that there might be a uniformity of action as well as of belief. And, just as no fruit of the patient systematic work of the husbandman, in ploughing, harrowing, sowing, and weeding may be seen at first; though we know from the abundant yield of the harvest that there must have been much care and toil expended on the fields; so when we hear of the large and wonderful increase in the numbers of Christians during the first ages, notwithstanding that they had no countenance or support from the civil powers, but had to endure those sore and terrible persecutions we read of, it should certainly convince a thoughtful mind, capable of judging of causes and effects, that, in the first planting of Christianity, there must have been immense pains taken on some definitely acknowledged plan or system, to have produced such results as are well known: it is the only reasonable way of accounting for them: and these Apostolical Canons give us the key to the problem; and plainly intimate that the Primitive Christians were everywhere found belonging to a systematically-organised body, whereby unity of the whole and of each part was well preserved, though many parts were severally far distant from others.

The great mass of learning, and searching investigation that has taken place, goes, then, to establish the main fact, that there was in existence a record, showing that the Church of Christ was a regularly constituted body, and that these Apostolical Canons were universally received and acted upon for the express purpose of carrying out the organization that existed among the Primitive Christians in a satisfactory and efficient way, so that peace, unity, and order might prevail throughout all quarters. No one appears to have doubted or questioned their genuineness when they were first sanctioned; or for many generations afterwards. There are no other ancient accounts to be found, whence it may be concluded that they were in any degree spurious, or that any other system was in existence. On the contrary, there are recorded facts which certainly go to prove their existence and validity more or less. As for instance, in the first General Council of Nice, A.D. 325, in the Second Canon of that Synod, it is shown that a certain practice prevailed which it was found necessary to correct; and the reason given for it is, that it was "contrary to the Ecclesiastical Canons," which proves that there were some such Canons in existence *at that time*, which the Church throughout the world acknowledged as the rule by which the body everywhere was governed. The practice referred to had been forbidden by the LXXX. Apostolical Canon, which stated that no man that had been recently converted or baptised should be

ordained into the higher orders of the ministry. Other Apostolical Canons were alluded to in the same Council, which sufficiently establishes their existence at that very early period.

So also, the General Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, finds occasion to name "an ancient law," and so also does the Council of Nice, wherein it is ordained that Bishops are to be ordained in the Ecclesiastical Province to which they belong. And this is proved to have reference to the XXXV. Apostolical Canon, which limits the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan. And when the General Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431, sent three times to summon the accused Bishop Nestorius to appear before them, it is evident that they did so in accordance with the Apostolical Canon LXXIV. And so also the like course was taken in the next General Council at Chalcedon, A.D. 451, for upon the *third* summons sent to Dioscorus, the Bishops sent to him, stated that they had come to him by order of the Council. And at the former Council at Ephesus, when a complaint was made against the Bishop of Antioch for trying to bring the island of Cyprus in subjection to himself; it was alleged to be "contrary to *the Apostolical Canons*, and the decrees of the most holy Synod of Nice." Many other proofs of a like character from other sources could be adduced, but these are surely sufficient to establish the genuineness of the Apostolical Canons, and a plain proof that the Primitive Christians were not living in an independent un-

connected way, without any definite system, rule, or oversight, or under any other system than this; but that as soon as they were made Christians, they were there and then received into a well organised body or Society, which was throughout the world, as far as the religion of Christ extended, carried on and governed by certain officers, and subject to certain well known rules or canons.

But there is this particular view of these "Apostolical Canons" to be noticed, which is, that the fundamental laws of the Constitution of the Church were not then for the first enacted in them; for that they previously existed, and were embodied in the Constitution of the Church, is proved in the best possible way, by the allusions made to them for the better administration of the Constitution; and they are to be taken for granted, and not to be questioned for a moment, but are regarded as well known and accepted by all. For example, there is no need to state that a man cannot be received as a Christian until he has been baptized: and that if he is to live as a Christian he must constantly receive the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. For these ordinances were everywhere acknowledged to be essential, and are not therefore named in these Canons. And so in like manner it is not laid down *for the first time*, as if only just then ordained, that there shall be Three Orders in the ministry, or, that the first order, viz., that of the Bishops, shall have the chief rule in the Church over the other Clergy and

laity, in their respective spheres, or, that a power of Discipline is intrusted to them. Still the three-fold Order, the authority of Bishops, and the exercise of Discipline are truly implied. Moreover, no doubt is left on the mind of the existence of these fundamentals, because they are constantly referred to *as parts of the permanent Constitution of the Church*. Regulations are made in these Canons as to these things severally, so that the Constitution may be properly and efficiently worked and upheld. Thus constant mention is made of the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, as different orders that *then*, at the time when the Canons were made, *existed*: and so also, as to *how* the Bishops are to rule, and what are *the limits of their jurisdiction*: and *how they are to settle the difficulties and controversies that arise*; as also the repeated allusions to the manner and extent of the Discipline which is to be exercised. The main laws of the Church were *then* fully known and observed at the time when the Canons were written, and give evidence of this; and hence prove that they were part of the original Constitution, for the establishment of which we must go a little higher up the stream of time, to those from whom the Primitive Christians received them.

From the evidence afforded in these Apostolic Canons alone, without reference to other sources, the Church of England is fully justified in stating that, "It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and Ancient Authors, that *from the Apostles' time*, there have been these three Orders of

Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which Offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by public Prayer, with Imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful authority." And the importance in establishing the genuineness of the "Apostolical Canons" is this, that it not only indubitably proves the existence of these three Orders as necessary to the full development and maintenance of the Constitution of the Church; but it unfolds to us a regular system, or organisation among the Primitive Christians, as we have before contended, for the preservation of its purity, peace, order, and unity: and without which these blessings could not have been adequately secured. In short, they disclose to us what we are in search of—*A Basis of true Christian Unity*, one far better than any that we can expect to invent, or fashion; one which has been tried, and found to be eminently successful; one which kept the Christians of those days together in One Body; so that the world recognised them as one people and Society everywhere; and whereby the faithful continued steadfast amid the most searching ordeals: one in which they could merge all their differences, and show all dutiful obedience to the will and design of Christ. This was a great thing; and we can never again expect to see the like peace, order, and unity among Christians,

until it is more fully recognised and adopted. But further, if this Constitution or Organisation in the Church, whereby all Christians were governed, and to which they readily submitted, and whereby they were so largely and fully united, was originated by Christ and His Apostles; if sufficient evidence of this can be given upon the most reliable authority, and such as should satisfy reasonable men, then it should no longer be *a* Basis, but *the Basis* of Christian unity for all the true followers of Christ; it should not be regarded by them as optional whether they adopted it or not, as *a* basis which they could not do better than accept; but as *the only one* for them, to which they should give in their adhesion and cling to; as the most sensible, likely, authorised, and sure way for accomplishing our Blessed Saviour's glorious purpose of making us, and keeping us all together as one in Him. Surely this is a subject that should engage the serious consideration of every real Christian, since it seems that there can be no other way whereby those who believe in Him may be truly united together, and whereby He may, in this respect, "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

If there is a reasonable proof of its *divine* origin to be found in the Scriptures, there ought to be no hesitation or doubt about our duty, and in what way we must shew a higher degree of faith, love, and obedience to Jesus our only Lord and Saviour. To the careful examination, therefore, of the Sacred Volume—which the generality of Christians loyally

accept as the standard of their faith and practice, however much they may differ—and to a diligent search after the meaning of the passages that relate to the unity of Christians, we would seriously and prayerfully commend those who are wishful to get to the bottom of the Inquiry.

Before closing this work we purpose to give a thorough examination of the Scripture testimony on this subject, and *the sense in which the passages were originally written, as far as can be ascertained, and in which they are consequently to be taken; and this before we take up the evidence obtained from the early Christian writers. But we must now proceed with the history of the Church's Unity; and to this end consider the altered condition of Christianity, from what it was before the time of Constantine to what it was afterwards. The change was very great, when we consider what took place immediately previous to this great deliverer coming into power.

After the Decian persecution (Cir. A.D. 250) the Church had rest for some fifty years; and then there came down upon her such a storm of persecution as there never has been the like before or since. It was a life and death struggle between Heathenism and Christianity; and all the secular powers were roused up to do their utmost to sweep away the entire Christian religion from the face of the earth.

Diocletian, the Roman Emperor, by his wise designs and resolute efforts, had infused new life and power into the great Empire over which he reigned;

and for more than a quarter of a century, from feelings of humanity, he had restrained the fury of the heathen against the Christians, and would not suffer them to be injured or disturbed. But the glory of a great name was eventually tarnished with lasting infamy by the last and one of the bitterest persecutions that had yet taken place. For at length his affection to the ancient religion of the heathens was stirred up by his son-in-law Galerius, who had been associated with him in the government, and entertained a cruel and undying hatred against the Christians. The philosophers of the day were opposed to them, because they would not tolerate or receive as true the existing religions of Paganism. And the priests and votaries of the false gods were especially moved to wrath, and endeavoured to incite the ruling powers against the Christians, because their temples were now largely deserted, and their influence with the mass of the people was fast waning. The very safety of the Empire was said to be in danger; and so at last Diocletian gave way, and a vigorous attempt was determined upon to root out of existence this pestilent religion, as they called it, which was so much on the increase.

In the earlier part of the year 303, the first edict was issued against the Christians: but no personal violence was enjoined; their churches were everywhere to be levelled to the ground; their sacred books to be burnt, and they were to be deprived of all civil rights and privileges. But other edicts of greater

severity followed quickly after, which touched the lives of the Christians. The Bishops and other ministers of the Church were to be sought out first; and the most horrible tortures were to be inflicted upon them, to force these venerable individuals to renounce their Saviour, and to offer incense to the false gods. It was in this persecution that the great Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, suffered martyrdom. And then, by a further edict, issued within another year, the persecution was extended to *all* Christians, whom the magistrates throughout the whole empire were commanded to search for, and compel them, without any regard to sex or station, to abjure their religion, under the fear of suffering the most agonizing torments.

The feast of the god Terminus, who presided over boundaries, had been selected, says one, to be the day "beyond which Christianity was to be unknown." The horrors of this persecution it is difficult to depict and most heart-rending to contemplate! In one of the Churches of Rome—a very large round one—the walls are filled with cartoons representing the various kinds of tortures of inconceivable barbarity, to which the Christians were put. The lowest computation would make them to exceed fifteen thousand persons who thus gained the crown of martyrdom. And the glory of their thus conquering through suffering and death, like their blessed Redeemer, lies in this, that they all might have easily escaped, or been released, if they would only throw a little incense upon the fire kindled on the heathen altars, to honour their

gods. But they would not: and, strong in faith, would rather endure the most excruciating sufferings than deny Christ, who had suffered and died on the cross for them. Oh, it was a terrible period!

The horrors of that persecution are not to be estimated only by the number of those who perished by torture, as by the attendant circumstances of dread, privation, and outrage as well, to which the great body of Christians were everywhere subjected, without actually suffering death at the time. An incredible number were sold into slavery, banished to the mines, or in some inhuman manner mutilated. They were hunted for as if they were wild beasts; their hiding places tracked out, and even in the dead of night, were followed to where they assembled in secret with a few of the brethren to worship, and to receive the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Moreover, the fear of what they might be called upon to endure, caused multitudes to hide themselves, or to fly to some distant and uninhabited spot, where they might not be pursued; "being," to use the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy), they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

The persecution raged, more or less, for ten years. And though, in some places, it was not so severely felt as in others; and especially in those provinces over which Constantius, the father of Constantine, had authority, for he could not be

persuaded to join in the cruelties that were perpetrated: yet, in some 'places, as in Palestine, and Rome, and Nicomedia, and in Lyons, as well as in other places, it seemed as if the Christians were well nigh exterminated.

In mercy, however, God shortened those days, for the elects' sake. A marvellous and striking testimony had been witnessed by the world in behalf of the truth, that Jesus was believed to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: a memorial of martyrdom never to be forgotten before God—which made a lasting impression upon the men of that generation; and which is ever to be had in remembrance by Christians, throughout all generations. But God's time was come, when He said, "It is enough: thus far shalt thou go, but no further:" for He put a limit to these persecutions. The power of Diocletion and of Galerius passed away. And though Licinius and Maxentius, who shared in the government of the empire, in different provinces, were still disposed to carry out the persecution to its extreme lengths; yet God in a signal manner raised up a defender for the Christians, in the person of Constantine; like as He had formerly done, in making Cyrus to be His Shepherd, and the deliverer of His ancient people from oppression and captivity.

Constantine, by distinction called "the Great," was led, probably by political motives at the first, to espouse the cause of the Christians, and become their champion and patron. In this resolution he was

further confirmed, by a singular sight or intimation from heaven, which directed him more particularly to the God of the Christians. The historian of Constantine's Life, heard him aver with his own mouth the following statement:— "I was meditating upon my situation (for his colleagues in the government were at war with him), and imploring God's help, when the wonderful vision was presented to me. A little after noontide, I beheld the figure of a cross strongly depicted in the sky, with this inscription, *In hoc vince, i.e., 'by this overcome,'* and did wonder at such a prodigy." And then, he says, that while much troubled in his mind to know what this vision might signify, and still thinking about it, when he went to sleep, Christ appeared to him and directed him to make a standard like to what he had seen, and to carry it as his banner when he went into battle against his enemies. (Vita Constan. I. 21—23.)

Now, whatever interpretation may be placed upon this account, it is a matter of fact that Constantine made the cross his standard, and had it borne in the front of his army, and in the thick of the fight on all occasions: and, one time after another, conquered and overthrew his enemies, till at last he became sole emperor of Rome, and held unlimited sway throughout the empire. In the meantime, Constantine had sought for instruction in the mysteries of the Christian Religion, and became deeply interested in divine knowledge. The first step, therefore,

that he took on gaining power, was to issue a decree of toleration, whereby Christians should no longer be persecuted, but left in peace to enjoy the freedom of their religion. But as yet he gave no proof that he regarded Christianity as the *only* true religion. On the contrary, whether from policy or belief, the emperor still treated other religions with respect, and especially that which the Romans had hitherto professed, confirming by a decree one of the grossest superstitions of paganism, viz., the exercise of divination.

It is true, as Mosheim says, that Constantine did not always remain in this state of indifference. In process of time, he acquired more extensive views of the excellence and importance of the Christian religion, and gradually arrived at an entire persuasion of its bearing alone the sacred marks of celestial truth, and a divine origin. Later on he became convinced of the falsehood and impiety of all other religions and institutions; and, acting in consequence of this conviction, he earnestly exhorted all his subjects to embrace the Gospel, and at length employed all the force of his authority in the abolition of the ancient superstitions.

Very early, however, after he became firmly seated in his authority, Constantine showed that the religion he was in favour of was the Christian religion, and that he would uphold it. Not only was it no longer to be persecuted, but it was to enjoy the liberty and rights which every other religion possessed in the

Empire from that time forward. And, further, he required that justice should be done, and recompense should be made to it, for the losses it had sustained as far as possible. The property which belonged to the Church, or any of her members, was to be restored; and all the Churches which had been destroyed or injured were to be restored and rebuilt at the expense of the Empire. Moreover, espousing their cause, he showered innumerable favours upon the Christians. He associated with their chief men, befriending them in many ways, and at his own cost built some splendid Churches for them in several places, as in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Antioch, as well as at Rome and Constantinople.

All this entirely altered the position of Christians; and gave them a standing and influence which they had not hitherto possessed. The Christian religion became eventually the religion of the Empire, and increased exceedingly; numbers were continually added; the doors of the Church were more than ever besieged; and it seemed as if nothing were wanting to make the Church entirely triumphant. But still there were serious drawbacks and dangers to be counted upon. Many were now induced to join her ranks from mixed motives; and doubtless there were a number who became nominal Christians; for now that the fear of being persecuted no longer prevailed, and since Christianity had become the favoured religion of the Court, many would be desirous of belonging to it from interested ends, without having those deep convictions

which those people had aforetime when they became members of the Church at the risk of their lives. Formerly, too, men shrank back from becoming Bishops in the Church, or holding chief places in it, when called to these high offices, fearing that they should not have strength to endure the contest, which they must keep up and take the lead in against the dominant heathenism around them, with the probability of their eventually becoming martyrs for Christ's sake. And it was only because they felt that God had especially called them, and therefore dare not keep back, that, counting the cost they consented to accept the post of danger as well as of honour. These were the kind of men that the Church had to guide and lead the Christians who flocked to their standard. Now, however, that the perils of such a position were past, and more of worldly honours fell to those who stood in the foremost ranks, and when their authority was upheld by the secular power, and the vast influence of their standing could be enjoyed with safety, there was the danger of some even gifted men making interest with those who had the election, to be advanced to these sacred places of rulership in the Church of God. Men, who, whatever zeal, piety, and ability they might outwardly display, would endeavour to creep into office, not altogether free from ambitious and covetous designs, which would afterwards greatly affect the purity and best interests of the body. Happily, there were at the head of affairs in the Church men of true devotion and integrity—many of whom had hazarded their lives in defence

of the truth as it was in Jesus—who, as far as they could, would guard the body from giving power to unworthy men, who would not only endeavour to direct and persuade Christians to make a right selection, but take all the care they could not to admit such men to the higher offices. Thus the main body was still, for the most part, for a long time kept pure and faithful; though, as might be expected, evil men, and men of perverse minds, would now more than ever try to gain position and acquire some influence among Christians.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNITY MAINTAINED UNDER ALTERED CONDITIONS.

THE position of Christians, as we have seen, had, within a few years, vastly changed for the better. We have but to contrast their then present with their former state; to consider the picture presented to our view by historical accounts of what their condition was in the years 303 and 304, and following years, to what it was in 313 and 314 and thenceforward, and we shall feel how very different are their circumstances to what they were—how much more advantageous and influential in a worldly point of view to what they were before. And we can well imagine the joy and gratitude which filled the hearts of the Christians, first to Almighty God, who had done such great things for them, and then to Constantine, the instrument of effecting this marvellous change, who had graciously been raised up to be their defender and succourer.

But what we are most concerned to know, and what most nearly touches the subject of our inquiry, is this: Did the outward change of circumstances in the condition of the Church lead to any alteration of its Divine Character? That is, was its fundamental organisation and principles, as left by Christ and His Apostles, in anywise tampered with, to make it

more acceptable to the world? Was its faith to be watered down, or in any wise to be regarded as a matter of little moment, so that men who denied what had hitherto been accounted essential, might still be members of the Church? Were its Sacraments to be held of less account, and not henceforward to be considered as generally necessary to salvation? Was the three-fold order of ministry to be altered; so that it should be reduced to one level? Or was the government of the Church by Bishops to be, in any degree, interfered with, so that it might be ruled by all the members of the Church; or were all the Bishops, hereafter, to be placed under one head or ruling power, and take their orders and authority from that one to whom they must be subject? Did Constantine alter the Constitution of the Church, as received and held by the Primitive Christians, or, by placing himself at its head, materially subvert its independency as a Divine Society? Did he demand, that in consideration of the Christians being admitted to the political freedom and privileges of Roman citizens, the Faith, and order, and authority that had hitherto been exercised in the Church should henceforth be in his hands, or be relaxed, so as to allow greater freedom and liberty to those subjects of the empire who might wish to become members of it? In short, was the Basis of Unity, which had all along been upheld in the Church from the beginning, to be done away with, and some other kind of unity, of what might be

called a more liberal and agreeable nature to the world, to be substituted in its place?

Now, as history records, and as we are prepared to show, Constantine endeavoured to establish the Christian Church on the same footing as it had been among the Primitive Christians, without any deliberate design to change its Constitution or character. Its internal organisation he would not alter; it was not his place or business: this belonged to those who were the duly appointed governors; nor was it his duty or prerogative to dictate what their faith should be, or that it should be in any wise changed to suit the wishes of the contentious. It evidently seemed to him presumptuous, and beyond his province. And yet he did, in some way, constitute himself its guardian and patron. It was, however, to guard it from injury, and further the object of its unity, to uphold its authority and decrees, but not to enforce his own will or that of others on the Church. It was, in every essential respect, to be what it was before, to have the same Faith, the same Sacraments and ordinances, the same authority and rule, the same orders of ministry, the same canons and regulations for the preservation of unity which it had hitherto maintained. The high position which he held as Emperor and absolute ruler, was rather to develop and enlarge its authority, on the same lines which had formerly existed in the body, and to give the force of law to what was unanimously determined by its legitimate rulers.

The position which he took was that which the civil government of the present day would occupy, when it duly performed the duties for which it was called into being; not turned about by political partisanship, popular clamour, or the prejudices of discontented sections, but when strong and courageous enough to deal equity and justice to all. As to religious matters, in seeing that none are injured or defrauded of their rights and liberties, and that the Constitution and decrees of the various bodies carry with them the force of law. It was thus that Constantine sought to establish the Church for Christians. This is manifest from the prayer he offered up for his people: "Let those who are led away with error desire to live in peace and tranquility with the faithful; for friendly kind society and intercourse with them will be much more available to bring them into the right way. *Let no man molest another, but let every one follow the persuasion of his own conscience.* . . . Still, those that will not be conformable thereto may have liberty to erect and set up altars, but we will maintain the Church and true religion, which Thou hast committed to our defence." (Vita Const. II. 65.) The same views are set forth also in one of Constantine's earlier edicts: "Let no man," he says, "in following that which he considers to be right and good, give any offence to another; but rather let him that hath knowledge and understanding endeavour to instruct and convert his neighbour; but if he cannot, let him give over the attempt. For it is one thing

to embrace religion willingly, and another to be compelled through fear of punishment. These things have I set down more at large than I intended, because I would not hide the true religion, and especially because some do give out in their speeches that the discipline of the Church is taken away, because I have suppressed the erroneous adoration of the false gods." (*Vita Const.* II. 69.) This latter step was taken, as it is shown elsewhere, because it was demoralising and hurtful to his people.

These are sentiments and views worthy of an enlightened and liberal sovereign, and will commend themselves to the thoughtful of this generation, who are opposed to all coercive force; and are convinced that any union founded on such measures is vain and mischievous. Well would it have been for Christendom if such views had been steadily and stoutly maintained by those in authority! What needless and cruel misery and bloodshed would have been spared in the world! What shameful and terrible passions it would have restrained! But when once this unchristian and inhuman principle of persecution prevailed, it was employed and brought into action by both parties—those who were accounted orthodox, and those who were regarded as heretodox. Alas! even Constantine himself was eventually led to forsake his own principles, and to persecute first one side and then another; and from that day to the present nineteenth century the religious world has set aside the true principles of religious liberty, which Constantine advocated so nobly;

and ever since one party of Christians has been at deadly feud with another. It is the glory of this age, however, that this lost principle has been largely recovered; and though it has for a time run to shameful licence, and brought forth more division, it is the right course to hold by, and as Christians learn more of the truth of unity and its real basis, they will draw more surely together, and some good fruit will yet arise from it.

The greatest service that Constantine rendered to the Church after it had been established, it has been said by one of the early Fathers, was the assembling of the first General Council at Nice, in Bithynia; whereby the heads of the Church from various parts of the world, witnessed to what was the Faith and Customs which had been received by them severally; and whereby they were enabled to settle by fixed decrees, as far as they could, what should in future be the universal Belief and Rule of the Church on all important points, as *the basis of Unity*, to which all true Christians should cleave.

The chief circumstance which led to the calling of this great Council was occasioned by the pernicious doctrines of Arius, at the beginning of the fourth century, who denied that Christ our Saviour was really God, and asserted that He was but a creature, and not from everlasting, or of the same substance or divine essence as God. His views and teaching had infected a few, and caused great trouble and dissension in the Church. Arius was at this time a Presbyter

in the Church of Alexandria: and had openly opposed his Bishop. He had been brought up in the school of Lucian, with Eusebius of Nicomedia, Leontius, and other persons, who afterwards joined in this deadly heresy. He is spoken of as a man of strict life, of grave appearance, and agreeable manners, winning in his address, but withal crafty, vain, and ambitious. He had, while a Deacon, been excommunicated for taking up something like the views of the Donatists, but had been received back by a succeeding Bishop who had ordained him Presbyter. And now he advanced opinions contrary to the received views which the Church had always held, and even took upon himself to condemn the teaching of his own Bishop, when discoursing upon the unity of the Trinity.

Alexander, at that time Bishop, expostulated with him, and privately endeavoured to convince him of his error; but Arius being an able logician, resisted all the attempts to bring him to a better mind, and only sharpened his speech to extend his false teaching. Alexander, seeing that all his efforts were in vain, and that a stop must be put to the heresy, called a Conference of his Clergy and people, where Arius was permitted publicly to state his views; when his subtle arguments were answered by other able men, and condemned. The Bishop then proceeded to excommunicate him, which judgment was afterwards confirmed by a large Synod of the Egyptian and Libyan Bishops.

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This appears to have still further stirred up the zeal of Arius, and his party, to propagate his false doctrine, and to gain adherents. He not only greatly distracted the Church in Alexandria, but in other parts of the world; and gained over to his way of thinking a few Bishops also, so that the breach only grew the wider, and threatened the disruption of unity; for this heresy had extended itself also in the East.

It was now that Constantine turned his attention to the matter, with an earnest desire to heal the breach, and restore peace to the Church. He had, after ten years from the issuing his celebrated edicts for the protection of Christians, entirely subdued his enemies in the East; and his authority had become universal, whereby the Church in that part, as well as in the West, enjoyed full liberty, and received many favours from the Emperor. His mind had been so occupied with matters of state and the affairs of war, that though he had become a Catechumen in the Church—in which, for reasons either of unworthiness, or from fear of sullyng his Baptismal purity, he continued till nearly the close of his life—and received sacred instructions, as well as constantly conversed with leading men in the Church, he had still an imperfect view of the nature of the quarrel and dissension which then prevailed, and the tremendous issues of the Faith for which the devoted servants of God were contending.

Very anxious as he was for peace, and to restore unity in the Church, he sent one of the Bishops, in whom he had confidence, to go to Alexandria and

endeavour to compose the differences ; and from a joint letter which he wrote to Alexander the Bishop and to Arius, we perceive how entirely he misunderstood the character of the dissension, and seemed to have advocated the agree-to-differ principle ; which, in this case, would have been destructive of the very life of Christianity, as well as the worst possible course for effecting any lasting unity. He reproved the Bishop for stirring up vain and curious questions ; and Arius for rashly contending with him, when he should have concealed his opinion, and not have thereby divided the people “by your factions.” “Therefore,” continues Constantine, “let both of you pardon one another, and consent unto that, whereunto your fellow-servant sent by me doth admonish you. But what is that? Namely, that neither of you ask questions concerning such matters ; nor answer unto such questions propounded.” He urged them again and again to be at harmony with one another, and set before them the conduct of heathen philosophers who differed in many points, but agreed in one profession ; “seeing you profess one faith, and one law, which are the sinews of the body of the Church, keeping it from schisms, and tying it together in one bond of love.” He proceeds, before he closes : “Agree, therefore, and let there be mutual concord between you, that the people may live in peace and unity.” (*Vita Const.* II. 67-69.)

This policy of peace and unity at the sacrifice of Divine Truth did not answer, and Constantine found that his efforts had been in vain. He was undeceived,

and became aware that the doctrine at stake was of the utmost importance. Moreover, it began to dawn upon him that the Arians were at fault, and were the chief transgressors. The Bishop whom Constantine had sent returned, and had given him an account of his efforts and what had passed. Alexander, out of gratitude for all the Emperor had done for the Christians, and for the love of peace and unity which so animated Constantine's soul, and stirred also in the heart of the Bishop himself, might have been disposed to comply with the urgent request of the Emperor. And if Arius had confessed his error and renounced it, he might have been received back into the Church. But when he still clung to his heresy, and still wanted to be counted a member of the Church, and be at peace on these terms, the Bishop, who was ably supported by the first theologian of the day, his Archdeacon Athanasius, still refused to admit the avowed heretic. For if the Bishop had yielded, see what would have been the consequences: he that denied the divinity of Christ, must be suffered to be in fellowship with those who believed in Him; and what possible concord could there be between the two? Instead of peace and unity which was so much desired, it would have broken up the very basis of unity which already existed in the Church, and had come down as an heritage to Christians from the Apostles!

For, if any one who had been received into the ministry, pledged to preach the Faith as it had been

held from the beginning, and abide by the Constitution of the Church, was suffered to deny the truth that Jesus was truly God, it would open the door to endless confusion and conflict: one set of preachers proclaiming the necessity of believing in Jesus as such, and others denying that it was true, and asserting that it was not necessary for their salvation that Jesus the Saviour should be so regarded; hence the people whom they taught would not know what to believe; and many would come to the conclusion that it mattered little what they believed; and so the truth of the Gospel would become questionable, and Christianity little more than a name. But if all along it had been essential to the unity of Christians that the members of the Church should all believe alike the fundamental truths of the Gospel—and in this particular case, that Jesus was truly God—yield obedience to the lawfully constituted authority, and submit to the constitution and discipline of the Church, as laid down, then the basis of true Christian unity would be preserved.

How could Alexander, then, as a faithful witness and guardian of the truth, have yielded to the policy which would sacrifice it for the sake of a temporary and hollow peace? Those who had been appointed Bishops in the Church of God, were bidden by the Apostles, as spoken by St. Paul, to “hold fast the form of sound words.” (2 Tim. i. 13.) And then, “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful men*, who

shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. ii. 2.) And being warned that "the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts would heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, who should turn away their ears from the truth." (iv. 3, 4.) How would it have become this Bishop, then, to have given way in this hour of trial, and consented to abandon the fortress of truth, which he had sworn to defend so long as life lasted? Therefore, as one has said, whatever offence he might give to politicians or worldly rulers, who thought that to minister to civil tranquility was the highest office of the Church, he would not allow errors to be propagated in that portion of the fold committed to his charge.

Truly thankful has the Church been ever since that such a bold stand was then made. It led Constantine to review his policy with regard to the Church; and to determine upon a new line of action in conformity with the Divine principles upon which it was founded: for he saw clearly that if he really desired to preserve harmony among his Christian subjects, it must be by upholding the Faith and government of the Church as it had hitherto been received, and as it was believed to have come down from Christ and His Apostles. And he fully recognised that this rule within the body would not be inimical to his civil authority, but rather be the more conducive to the general peace and unity of the Empire. The Bishops alone had received authority from the

Apostles to govern the Church; and their office constituted them the attestors of what the truth of Christianity was from the beginning, as shewn not only by the Scriptures which they possessed, but by the way in which those before them had received it in various places, as coming down to them from the Apostles. If, then, a *consensus* of evidence could be gathered from the whole Church, it would be the most satisfactory means of determining the disputes in question, and coming to some definite settlement of what the basis of truth and unity in the Church truly was, and would commend it most powerfully to Christians in future generations. Now none but Constantine could convene such an assembly of Bishops together from all parts of the world: and it was only within a year or two that he had become able to do this, in reducing the Eastern portion of the Empire to his dominion. And this he accordingly did, by inviting them to meet together at Nice, in the year 325: and defraying the cost of their journey and their entertainment. It was desirable that they should thus assemble together for other purposes besides determining the question about Arianism. There had been much dispute about the time of keeping Easter. And some of the Bishops or Metropolitans had begun to encroach upon the jurisdiction of others, to which they had no natural right. These matters might then be settled also, so that, as Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, has it, "those who differed in any point from the great body of Christians might be brought into unity with their

brethren." This same historian tells us, as he partly gathered from Eusebius, that, "from all the Churches of Europe, Africa, and Asia, the most distinguished servants of God assembled. Within the precincts of one house of prayer were seen Syrians and Cilicians, men of Phœnicia and Palestine, of Egypt and Libya. With these came a Persian Bishop, and another from Scythia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia sent their best. Others came from Thrace and Macedonia, from Achaia and Epirus, and the regions beyond: of the Spaniards also there was present, together with many others in that company, one that was counted notable, of great fame and renown (Hosius). But the Bishop of the princely city, by reason of his old age, was absent, but was represented by two of his clergy." (Lib. 1. 5.) The number, altogether, as St. Athanasius, who was present, and others tell us, was 318. "But of the Priests and Deacons, and Acolytes and others that accompanied them, the number could not be told." (Soc. 1. 5).

The Bishops present were but a portion of the number then exercising their sacred office, but they were for the most part representative, chosen men: often the chief Bishop of the Province, who attended to speak on behalf of himself and the surrounding Bishops. And what gave the greater weight to the decisions of this Council, was the number of Bishops who had proved the sincerity of their Faith by their sufferings in the late persecutions, and who still bore in their bodies "the marks of the Lord Jesus." As

Socrates says, "a whole throng of martyrs might be seen gathered together. There was Paulus, Bishop of Neocæsarea, who had suffered from the cruelty of Licinius, and was maimed, both in his hands and feet, by burning irons. Others had lost their right eyes, or their right feet; of these was Paphnutius, an Egyptian Bishop.

There are many particulars recorded, relative to this great Council, but it would lead us away too much from our subject to enter into details. Suffice it, that with regard to the Divinity of Christ, another creed was framed, defining this point more fully, that there should be no doubt about the doctrine; and that henceforth Christians might know for certain what they were to believe about Jesus, without being led astray by false teaching; therefore, in the Nicene Creed, Jesus Christ is not only spoken of as the only begotten Son of God, but as "of one substance with the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." This was confirmed and assented to by more than three hundred of the Bishops; who with one voice and one mind subscribed thereto, five only of those present at first refusing. This matter was discussed and settled in the presence of the Emperor. Arius had been permitted to plead his cause and views, and replies were given to him, chiefly by Athanasius, the great defender of the Faith at that time. The Fathers of the Church assembled were not called *to reason* about the ground of their belief, but *to witness* to what had been the

Faith as they had severally received it. Arius and his party were, however, so persistent, that the Bishops refused to listen to him any longer, and closed their ears that they might not hear any more of what they regarded as his blasphemous language.

Constantine, seeing this overwhelming majority, confirmed the creed, as drawn up, to be the Faith of Christians, with respect to Christ, and decreed that the Church was fully justified in not suffering those who denied it to remain in her Communion. And to this he gave the force of law. Three of the five who at first refused, now subscribed their names. And Constantine not only sanctioned the excommunication of Arius, and the two Bishops that still withheld their assent, with their adherents, but as a punishment, sent them into banishment, that they might not any longer disturb the peace and unity of the Church by their pernicious words. Thus the true faith seemed at last to be established. The Council was continued sometime longer. A decision was come to about the time of holding Easter, viz., that it should always be on the Sunday. And twenty Canons were agreed upon relative to various matters connected with the government and discipline of the Church: the principle of which seemed to be contained in these words, "let the ancient customs prevail;" this is the law of the Church.

The only Canons to which our attention need be drawn in passing are the IVth, Vth and VIth. For

some irregularity had given rise to them, and others called for some decisive rule to preserve order in the Church. Meletius had taken upon himself to ordain priests and deacons for other dioceses over which he had no authority; and even consecrated Bishops on his own responsibility. This was contrary to the Apostolical Canons, which had hitherto been the accepted rule for preserving order and peace between the different Churches. Was this infringement of the law in the Church to be permitted? Certainly not. Therefore the Council deprived Meletius of all authority in the Church; and to prevent any such irregularities in future, passed the above Canons. The fourth decreed that the consecration of a Bishop should in general be the act of all the Bishops of the Province, with the consent of the Metropolitan; and that the consecrators should be at least three in number: so that no one Bishop by himself should be able lawfully to consecrate another. The fifth Canon enacted that persons excommunicated in one Diocese should not be received in another, as already ordered in the the Apostolical Canons (12), but that inquiry might be made in the Provincial Synods, to ascertain whether a Bishop had been justified in pronouncing the excommunications he had done. The sixth Canon provided that the Bishops and Metropolitans should not go beyond their own Province in their ministrations and use of authority; and that it was not lawful to exercise jurisdiction in the Province of another, so that the independence of the Church in various parts

might be maintained. Hence the Canon, though short, was emphatic: "Let ancient customs be observed in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, so that the Bishop of Alexandria have authority over all those places; because the same custom is observed by the Bishop of Rome also. And so likewise in Antioch and other Provinces, let the dignities and privileges be preserved to the Churches." Which Canon is strictly in accordance with the Apostolical Canons. (See numbers 14, 34 and 35.)

From which Canon it would appear that the Bishop of Rome, at the time of this Council, kept strictly to his own Province, which did not include even the northern part of Italy; and that he did not claim authority over other Churches not within his jurisdiction. And so also none could exercise authority over the Churches in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, but the Bishop of Alexandria, who was the recognised Primate or Patriarch of those parts. Not that it was his privilege or right to interfere with the authority of the several Bishops within his jurisdiction, so long as they exercised their high calling faithfully; but that no Bishop in those parts should be consecrated without his consent; that if any Bishop was found unfaithful, he was the proper person to call him to account, reprove, or institute proceedings against him; and that he should call upon these Bishops to hold counsel with him in the Synods, and preside over their proceedings. "And so likewise in Antioch and other Provinces." Hence, likewise we learn that there

were at this time, in the judgment of the Nicene Council, no universal Bishop, or any idea of setting up any human head over the whole Church; for this would have been to overthrow the independence of the Church, and bring in many evils, as experience clearly shows. The other Canons related to various matters, such as the precedence of Bishops, the case of the lapsed, &c., which need not be considered here.

Now, it is important to notice the passing of these Canons, not only on account of the weighty matters to which they severally refer, but because they show that the Government of the Church had not been taken away or subverted by the civil supremacy of the Emperor: that it was still one and the same as it had been from the time of the Apostles, and was still to remain as before in the hands of the Bishops: that the Constitution and rules for preserving order and unity throughout the whole body in legislating for its increasing needs, and correcting deficiencies and innovations that would arise from time to time, had not been changed, but were continued and extended on the original lines as formerly laid down, and generally accepted by the Primitive Christians. There was not, therefore, at the time of this Council (A.D. 325) a new kind of government introduced, different from what there had been previously; but the ancient one was still in existence, exercising the same authority and jurisdiction as before; only with this difference, that it was now recognised, confirmed, and established by civil and

imperial authority as the authentic and lawful rule of the Church, to which all true Christians should submit and look up to for guidance.

We contend then, that Apostolic Order existed without any essential change being made: just as we contend that no new faith, or article of faith, had been introduced, but the old faith continued as it was delivered to the saints by the Apostles, and for which Christians were "earnestly to contend;" and that it was then only further established, its meaning and sense being more fully defined and guarded by an additional Creed, that the Faith might not be tampered with and corrupted by perverse teachers of false doctrine; "even denying the Lord that bought them:" so that Christians may for a certainty "know in whom they have believed, and be persuaded that He is *able* to keep that which is committed unto Him against the great day."

Thus are we assured, from what took place at the great Council of Nice, that, under the vastly altered condition of Christians one and the same basis of true Christian unity as that which existed before was still maintained. There was the old Scriptural standard of faith and practice now universally recognised and accepted, whereby all Christians might come to an agreement, and by which they might steadfastly abide, and under which they might march on their way Zionward in every place, and in all generations. A standard or basis to prevent, or do away, with so much division and dissension; and whereby Christians

might all be led "to mind the same things," and "to walk by the same rule:" so that our blessed Saviour's earnest prayer for all those who believed in Him, that they may be *one*, might be more fully and perfectly accomplished.

It is, moreover, worthy of note, that when Constantine had become better acquainted with the rules and constitution of the Church, through the instructions he received, and the intercourse he held with the Bishops and leading Churchmen, he frequently refers to the former rule and government of the Church as a thing that existed in his days as of Divine authority, and constantly names *the Apostolical Canons* as the authority by which the Church was guided, thereby showing that the basis of unity, both with respect to doctrine and conduct was still continued, and that no essential alteration had been made or was designed, but that it was materially one and the same as before. For proof of this, we would observe that in writing to Eusebius, who had refused to be translated to the more important bishopric of Antioch, though chosen by general consent; Constantine tells him, "Moreover, you have done wisely, in that you have observed the commandment of our Lord, and *the Apostolical Canon* of the Church, by refusing the bishopric of the Church of Antioch, desiring to continue in that Episcopal seat, where you have been placed by God's providence." (*Vita Const. Lib. III. 59*). And his biographer tells us, that in writing to the Christians of Antioch, Constantine "admonished them that they should not seek

the Bishop of another Church, but according to the custom and manner of the Church, choose some other person for their Bishop." (III. 57.) And later on, in speaking of Eusebius, Constantine says, that "he seemed very careful to observe the decrees of the Church," and then proceeds, "but there are others whom you yourselves think worthy to be elected to a Bishopric (whom they might elect) that so you might decree and resolve that which is agreeable to *the Apostolical Canons.*" And concludes, "Which men being propounded to your choice, may moderate your wisdom and govern your choice, according to the Ecclesiastical Canon and *Apostolical doctrine*, and agreeable to the Ecclesiastical Constitution. God preserve you, my dear brethren." (III. 60.)

Later on by some years, his biographer says that Constantine again "confirmed with his royal authority the Canons and determinations of the Bishops, which they had decreed in their public Consistories. For the judgment of the priesthood in Ecclesiastic matters is to be preferred before the opinion of a secular judge." (V.C. IV. 27). Later still, in writing to the Synod held at Tyre, Constantine observes that the Synod has been called "for relieving the religious, and the reducing of refractory brethren, that these separatists may be brought into an unity of opinion; as also, that errors crept into the Church may be rectified, that the Provinces may live in peace and concord, which the arrogant pride and idle folly of some men hath disturbed. . . . Do not, therefore, delay the

business, but cheerfully endeavour to end and determine these present controversies, that you may retain the ancient Christian faith, which our Saviour chiefly required in the Church, making unity a badge of the true Church. And we will perform our part in furthering your design." And concludes by saying: "Concerning other matters, your holinesses may correct and rectify all errors without hatred or favour, according to *the Ecclesiastical and Apostolical Canons* ; that you may free the Church from all disturbance, and me from care, and you, by settling matters in quietness, may gain much honour and glory. God preserve and protect you, beloved brethren." (Vita Const. IV. 42.)

There is another point connected with our inquiry which transpired at the great Council at Nice, which should be noticed in passing, viz., the attempt to introduce a rule not in keeping with ancient customs, and by many considered contrary to Holy Scripture, and that is the *Celibacy of the Clergy*, meaning Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. And that, henceforth, they should not keep company with their wives, to whom they had been married. And it is desirable to see how the Council dealt with the question ; for the future guidance of the Church. When some of those present were about to reason about the matter, *Paphnutius*, who was himself unmarried, "stood up in the midst of the assembly of Bishops, and brake out into loud speech and language, that the necks of Clergymen, and such as were entered into Holy Orders, were not to be pressed down with a heavy yoke and grievous burden,

saying, that 'marriage was honourable, and the bed undefiled;' that it was their part to foresee, lest that with too severe a censure, they should greatly injure and offend the Word of God; that all could not possibly endure such an austere discipline, so as to be void of all perturbation and frailty of the flesh; and that, peradventure likewise, every one of their wives could not brook so rare a rule of continency prescribed unto them. He termed the company of man and wife, lawfully coupled together, chastity. . . . To conclude, *the whole Council* then assembled of Ecclesiastical persons, yielded unto the sentence of Paphnutius; wholly ending all controversy that might arise in behalf of it; and permitting liberty unto every man at his own pleasure to refrain, as he listed, from the company of the married wife." (Soc. Lib. I. 8.)

The proposition would have introduced a new custom of great hardship, with attendant evils, to which the Church hitherto had given no sanction. A Canon to effect this, would have been on other lines than that which it had considered lawful to take, and would have opened the door to other harsh rules; but chiefly was it not suffered to be brought forward for discussion, because it was not in keeping with Scripture, but seemed only contrary to it. Therefore the Council would not entertain the matter for a moment. This ought to have settled the matter for all times; and, that any part or branch of the Church should endeavour to enforce the celibacy of the Clergy, is to be reprobated, as acting contrary to the principles of Christ's

Holy Catholic Church, and introducing the principles of evil discord within her borders.

It is to be observed that Constantine paid great deference to the Bishops assembled in this Council. He was very courteous and conciliatory, and manifested a sincere desire to abide by their judgment, and carry out their decisions by the weight of his Imperial authority, as the law of the Church. He himself did not arrive in Nice until a fortnight after the opening of the Council; that the Bishops and other Ecclesiastics might have time to discuss matters by themselves, and the action they should take. Then when he came, he invited them to his palace; and being all assembled, they awaited his presence in silence. On his entrance with a few friends, they all stood up and received him with the deference due to his high position; and on his arriving at the upper end or dais of the hall, a golden chair was brought for him, but he would not sit down until all the Bishops were again seated. And in his address to the Assembly, he told them how much grieved he had been to hear of their dissensions; and that he should be much pleased to effect a unity of affection and concord among them; concluding with these words: "Therefore I entreat you, beloved Ministers of God, and servants of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, take away the causes of your dissensions and disagreements, and cut off the heads of this *hydra* of heresy, and establish peace among yourselves. So shall you please God, and me your fellow servant in the Lord." (Vita Const. III. 12.) Many appeals and letters

had been sent to him by various individuals interested in the discussion on both sides, but he declined to read them, and put them all into the fire, to show that he would not be influenced by private opinions, or to let them know that the issue of matters did not rest with him, but with the Council of Bishops, who were free and qualified to decide all questions relative to the Faith, government, and discipline of the Church.

What Constantine did do, was to see that the accused had a fair hearing, so that Arius and his party might plead their cause in the best way they could; and that the Bishops, severally, should be left entirely at liberty to give their judgment as they, in their wisdom, assisted by the influence of the Holy Spirit, might think fit, without being biassed or prejudiced by himself or any others. He aided the Council also in coming to a decision on those points which had engaged their attention; and thus ending the discussions, which would have been interminable, by some definite and practical conclusion, which were embodied in the Creed adopted, and the Canons decreed. And then, stamping these with his civil authority as the doctrine and law of the Church on those particular points about which differences had arisen; so that all Christians throughout the Empire might be of one mind and of one body.

And before the venerable Fathers of the Council took their departure, Constantine made a great feast for them in his palace, and entertained them for some time right royally, treating them as intimate

friends and with great affection. Especially did he show great reverence towards those who had suffered in the cause of Christ, as witnesses of the Truth. Thus, as Socrates tells us, Paphnutius, a Bishop of the upper Thebian territory, of whom mention has been already made, and accounted a very virtuous and holy man, had had one of his eyes pulled out during the late persecution. Therefore he sent for him at sundry times to come to his palace, and was wont, out of his deep reverence, to kiss the empty place of the banished eye. (Lib. 1. cap. 8).

And, on finally parting, being all assembled together again to bid farewell, he addressed them, bidding them to take care to preserve mutual peace and concord among themselves; and to avoid contentious wrangling: to deal leniently and gently with those who submit themselves; to pardon errors proceeding from human frailty, and so live in amity and unity, lest the Word of God and the Christian religion be scandalised and evil spoken of; concluding by asking their prayers for himself. Constantine also ordered letters to be written in his name to all Churches, exhorting them to receive the decrees of the Synod, and the Faith, as set forth in the Nicene Creed; and to excommunicate those who acted perversely and caused dissensions. The principal Bishops of the Council were deputed to convey the same to all provinces, and to see that the instructions were faithfully attended to. Thus it was established, that as there was one kind of government lawfully

constituted for Christians as having originated from Christ and His Apostles, so there must be one Faith for all, on all material points, and one rule of action, whereby there might be a real uniformity in all Churches throughout the world; though there was always liberty for diversity of customs and ceremonies, so long as each Church kept within the boundaries of the Canons, but not beyond. Hence see what the Church of England says on this latter point in her XXXIVth Article.

Seeing how the basis of unity for true Christians was still maintained, as shewn in the proceedings of the first General Council held at Nice, two or three reflections seem to force themselves upon our notice, relative to the government of the Church, in concluding this Chapter.

And first, if there had been anything like Presbyterian government in the Church since the times of the Apostles, say for fifty years, or even twenty,—if it had ever been received even for so short a period, as the recognised government among Christians, or if there had been any certain traces of its existence at all among the Primitive Christians—now would have been the time to put forward a claim for such a rule, and to have brought forward some proofs in support of it. Now, when Arius, the Presbyter in Alexandria, was quarrelling with his Bishop, and fomenting discord to gain adherents in this and other dioceses, would have been the right opportunity to have re-asserted Presbyterian government if it had ever

existed; and on the other hand, to have shown—if it were so—that at some time since the days of the Apostles the Bishops had usurped dominion and exercised an authority over the Presbyters which had not been committed to them from the beginning. Now would have been the time for the Presbyters, or a number of them at least, to have made common cause; and claimed that their voice ought to be heard as of equal authority with the Bishops in the great Council of the Church. Constantine represented the secular power of the Empire, and was ready to hear all claims, and to deal justice to all; to give what was right and lawful to all his subjects, to deal impartially and rectify any usurpation or wrong, if there had been any, if such an important matter as that of Presbyterian government had been put forward. For Arius and his adherents had been allowed free speech before the Bishops in the presence of the Emperor. Here, then, was not only a fitting opportunity, but a suitable tribunal, when Arius might have advanced the claims of Presbyterian government, or at least shown cause why the rule and management of the Church in various places should not have been remitted to the judgment of the Presbyters.

But what must we think, when no such claim was brought forward at such a time, or at any other time pressed upon the Emperor's notice; when no mention is made of the rule of the Episcopate as arbitrary, not an allusion to it even as being an innovation: neither one nor the other matter even

broached or hinted at? When neither the rule of the Bishops was complained of, nor any claim for Presbyterian rule even so much as suggested? To what conclusion can impartial thinking men come, when not a word of Presbyterian rule, in contradistinction to Episcopal government, is heard of, or brought before the Emperor, and no redress is sought for from him? What conclusion but this: that no such thing as Independent, Presbyterian, or Congregational government in the Church of Christ, had ever existed since the days of the Apostles; that such systems were unknown at that time, and not even thought of. And showing us that such systems must really have arisen at a much later date, originating in a misconception of Scripture records; arising, no doubt, from men finding themselves forced into an isolated position, which they felt compelled to take in separating from the Church, because the Roman Communion demanded their adhesion to articles of faith and superstitious practices, which ought never to have been exacted, and which those who separated felt they could never conscientiously give, as being contrary to what they believed to be the Word of God. This might have justified them in the step they took; for what communion could they have with a corrupt Church? It was an unfortunate and cruel position for them. And then when they found that there was no redress for them, they endeavoured to establish their communities as Scriptural, by falling back upon what they represented, or imagined to be

an earlier or more primitive mode of governing the Church, than that of Bishops, upon that, which, in fact, and as proved by ample evidence, did not exist.

By a similar test, or mode of reasoning, we come to perceive that the Papacy did not at that time exist; and could in no satisfactory manner be traced up to the Apostles, as being the mode of government which they established in providing for the order and unity of the Church. For, if anything like the Papal supremacy claimed by the Church of Rome had existed at this time, whereby it could be shown that all the Bishops in the other Patriarchates or provinces had been subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Pope; how is it that not an intimation or word of this appears, or is heard of, on this important occasion, when, if ever, it should have been known and recognised? It is most unaccountable! And the only reasonable solution is, that such a position and authority did not then exist in the Church; that it was not a part of the original Constitution of the Church as designed by Christ and His Apostles; notwithstanding the few texts and arguments which were afterwards brought forward as giving some ground for such supremacy.

Can you imagine such a thing, that if at the calling of the Council of Nice, the Bishop of Rome had held supreme authority in the Church, it could have been passed over in silence; and not an allusion to it even, or the pretence of it put forward? At

such a critical moment, if there had been the least foundation for the Papacy, we should certainly have heard something of it. But as no mention is made of it, it is a clear sign that it did not then exist: if it had, why should Constantine have been at the trouble and expense of summoning the Bishops from all parts of the world, bearing the cost of their journeys and entertaining them; and putting them to this great inconvenience; and so anxiously awaiting their decision, when he could have at once appealed to the Bishop of Rome to decide the matters in dispute, and have settled the questions at once? Why should he not at least have consulted him on the matter, or asked for his judgment? The fact that he did not do this; that it was not suggested to him even, that no one seems, at such a time, to have known anything about it, or, at least, that no one appears to have uttered a word to the Emperor respecting it; and that he determined upon the course he did as necessary for the peace and unity of the Church, without any particular reference to the Bishop of Rome, though it was still the imperial city, most plainly proves that Papal rule had not yet been begun, or even projected; and that it must have arisen at some later date in the history of the Church, as the facts of history will fully corroborate and show to be the case.

A further matter will greatly impress the mind of the student of ancient ecclesiastical history, if he is one that can grasp the meaning and significance of

authenticated facts, is this: that Constantine found the Christians generally living under one and the same kind of government everywhere—a body independent of the secular power, yet not antagonistic to it, if not opposed and persecuted by it; but rather supporters of the powers that be, if dealt fairly with and allowed to dwell in peace and manage their own affairs. He came to understand that the Church to which they belonged had a separate authority, administered by spiritual directors, separate laws and ordinances, and separate interests also, which did not interfere with the civil government; and therefore Constantine felt that it was a power in the Empire, whose friendship it was desirable to cultivate, and whose peace and unity it behoved him to further and establish. He found when he came into power that the Bishops as a body were the lawfully constituted rulers of the Church, that the Clergy and Laity in general submitted to their government and discipline; that they were guided by, corrected and censured by them, as the proper guardians of the peace, unity, and welfare of the body; and that it was the general belief of all that the authority which they exercised had been derived from Christ and His Apostles.

Therefore it was that the settlement of all religious controversies were left by Constantine to the Bishops as a united governing body; as also the correction of all disorders among themselves, and particularly against the encroachments upon the juris-

diction of others ; that the forms of divine worship, the ordering of the regular services, rites, and ceremonies, or the institution of new ones ; the ordination of ministers for the separate orders, the right and control of preaching, the right of meeting in Diocesan and Provincial Synods, the right of censure and excommunication, were left exclusively to their directions, safeguarded from abuse by the organisation the Church had within herself. In these matters the civil magistrate, as Constantine came to learn, had no right to interfere or hinder. His own words to the Bishops of a Provincial Council were : *Vestri est, non mei iudicii, de ea re cognoscere.* It was only when they violated the laws of the empire, or interfered with the general welfare of the community, that it was deemed right, and the duty of the civil power, to intervene, but not otherwise.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN THE BASIS OF UNITY.

THE one lesson which the Church had constantly to learn was, "Put not your trust in Princes, nor in any child of man." Only let her ministers be faithful to the Lord, who bought them, whose servants they are, and this will be her best course in all difficulties and dangers that attend her career. Such counsel was singularly needed and appropriate, even in the case of Constantine's dealing with the Christian Church, which had been so greatly indebted to him.

It should be stated that the two Bishops that would not accept the Nicene Creed, and had been deposed and excommunicated, afterwards, concealing their real opinions, and temporizing with the decisions of the Council, at last confessed their error, and expressed their willingness to receive the doctrines of the Church as almost universally acknowledged. Arius also eventually professed to believe in the Nicene Faith; so there seemed a fair prospect of peace and unity. But the ark of Christ's Church has to pass through the waves of this troublesome world, and must expect to meet with opposition and storms which would try her faith and steadfastness. For, however prosperous and successful for a time her career may be, she can never continue long in one stay. The warning of St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus, needed

at this time to be continually called to mind by the chief Pastors of the Church, "take heed unto yourselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made you overseers. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." For, strange to relate, though Constantine was thoroughly aware of the Faith held by the Church, he was won over to the side of the Arian heresy; and if he did not actually adopt it, he was led to favour its teachers, and to persecute some of the orthodox Bishops because they would not yield to it, or receive into the Church those who denied the divinity of Christ.

This sad change is accounted for in this way. Constantine's sister, who had embraced the heresy of Arius, and was a devoted admirer of his, came to live at the Emperor's Palace after the death of her husband; and, constantly seeing Constantine, persuaded him that the views of Arius had been much misrepresented, and that he was an ill-used man. And on her death-bed she extracted a promise from her brother, that he would send for Arius, and hear from his own mouth what he had to say about the views he held. Now there are some men who have such a fascinating address, that they have a singular power of impressing their views upon those who will listen to them for awhile, and this faculty Arius seems to have had. For when he came to stay at the Palace,

he soon persuaded the Emperor that there was merely a verbal difference between him and the Nicene Fathers, and that he, and those who held with him, had been shamefully treated. Constantine's sense of justice was roused; and, at Arius's request, he sent for the two Bishops that had been excommunicated to hear what they said. After this, the Emperor, thinking they had been too severely dealt with, took them into favour again, and would see what he could do for their cause. The Arians (A.D. 335) ventured to compose a new creed, or rather to alter the Nicene Creed, so as to make it almost like it to a casual observer, though it was vitally different on the great question. And by this means they gained a larger number of adherents, and several more of the Bishops became better affected towards them, as the means of effecting a compromise between them and the orthodox, which they knew the Emperor now desired to bring about.

The chief attack was centred upon St. Athanasius, who had been the great champion of Faith in the late Council; and who, upon the death of Alexander, which occurred shortly after, was by an overwhelming majority, called to succeed him as Bishop of Alexandria, and Primate of Egypt. Constantine, at the instigation of Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, who had been excommunicated—not Eusebius the historian—required the re-admission of Arius to the Communion of the Church; and according to the Canons of the Church, he must be received in the Church of Alexandria. Athanasius, however, stood firm, and

resolutely refused to comply with the Emperor's demand. The Arians then attempted to trump up false accusations against him, to get him deposed; but these he was able clearly to refute, so much so that the Emperor wrote to the Primate, expressing his unabating confidence in him.

His opponents, however, pursued their attacks against him with relentless enmity: and they induced the Emperor to have their amended views tried in another Synod. The Arians, led on by those "full of all subtilty," endeavoured to pack the Synod with those Bishops favourable to their views, and exclude, as far as possible, all the orthodox. Athanasius, at Constantine's request, appeared to plead his own cause; but they would scarcely listen to him; they speedily condemned him, and sentenced him to be deprived of his Bishopric. And so mad against him were some of the Arians, that, unless some of the Emperor's soldiers had interfered, he would have fallen a sacrifice to their fury. As it was, they prevailed with the Emperor to banish the Primate.

Afterwards Athanasius sought an opportunity to present himself before the Emperor; whose words relative to it we shall here give in a letter to the members of the Synod, who continued to sit in Council from time to time, as if they had the rule of the Church in their hands, summoning them to his presence, for he says: "As I rode in my waggon unto a certain place within the city and happy soil, called after my name, Constantinople, Athanasius, the

Bishop, together with certain Presbyters in his company, suddenly and unlooked for met me in the midst of the street, which amazed me not a little. I take God to witness, who knoweth all things, that I should not have known him at first sight, had not some of my train both told me who he was, and what injury had been done unto him. I truly did not talk with him at that time, nor reason of any circumstance. And when he intreated that I would give him an hearing, I was so far from it that with the denial I gave him, I had almost caused him to be sent packing with rough treatment. His suit was nothing else, but that all of you might be brought hither, to the end that in our presence he might expostulate with you for the injury he had suffered and the necessity he had been driven to. The which suit seeming very reasonable, and the occasion also requiring it, made me very willing to write this unto you, that all of you assembled at Tyre should forthwith hasten to my camp, and justify in my presence that your judgment and sentence in this matter was right and sincere." (Socrates, Lib. I. cap. 22.) There is no need to continue the letter further.

But the issue of it was that the greater part of the Bishops, dreading the interview, returned to their own places, while Eusebius of Nicomedia, and a few other bolder spirits who still hoped to gain the Emperor's ear went, but they no longer argued about the broken cup, or the table that was overthrown, or about Arsensius that was said to be murdered, which

had been charged against Athanasius, but brought another accusation against him, that he had threatened to forbid the people of Alexandria sending corn to Constantinople, which so incensed the Emperor against Athanasius, that he finally sent him into exile in France.

In the meantime Arius had repaired to Alexandria, and exulting at the turn of affairs much incensed the people against him, in that he was to be restored, and their Bishop banished; and constant uproars occurring, the Emperor sent for Arius to Constantinople to give an account of the tumult and sedition that he had raised. Another Alexander was now Archbishop of Constantinople, who stoutly upheld the Nicene Canons and Creed: and became the more so because Eusebius threatened that he would work his banishment also, unless he would admit Arius and his company to communion. The Emperor had sent for Arius, and demanded from him whether he held to the Nicene Creed or not. He presented the Emperor with a confession he had drawn up in the words of Scripture, relative to the point in dispute. The Emperor felt that this was an evasive answer, and said, "This is not sufficient; you must forthwith sign in my presence, the decrees and the creed of the Council without alteration." It is said, that with a smile, Arius did so. Constantine, evidently, still distrusted the man; and demanded that Arius should state on oath, that he believed in it without any evasion or mental reservation. And Arius took the

oath accordingly: Constantine remarking, that "Arius had well sworn, if his words had no other meaning, otherwise, God would avenge." It was then that the Emperor gave orders that Arius should be re-admitted into the Church by the Archbishop of Constantinople.

It was a critical moment. Alexander tried hard to induce the Emperor to recall his Imperial mandate, but in vain. He had for many days besought the help of Almighty God with prayer and fasting. And now, when he found how vain was the help of man, and that the Emperor insisted upon him doing that which his conscience forbade him to do, if he would continue faithful to Christ and His Church, he returned to the Church where numbers of the orthodox were assembled for prayer at this great crisis, and falling down on his bare knees before the altar, he continued praying till the tears trickled down his cheeks. And the substance of his solemn prayer was this: that he might be taken out of the world, from the evil that was coming, rather than admit Arius to the Communion of the Church, or that Arius should be rooted out of earth, lest being received into the Church, his heresy should be received also; and thereby the heritage of the Lord be put to confusion and brought to ruin.

The cause had now been solemnly committed into God's hands, and awful was the issue. The day before that in which Arius was to be received into the Church, he paraded the streets of Constantinople in triumph and grand array, when suddenly he was

compelled to withdraw from the procession in great pain, to a common place of retirement, where his bowels gushed out, and he shortly afterwards died like a dog. Such are the facts, upon which we need not comment further than to say that he died by the visitation of God: for the end of Arius was not after the ordinary manner. Great fear fell upon all men, and the authority of the Church and the Nicene Creed were for a time held in greater esteem.

The year after this Constantine himself died, and his three sons reigned in his stead. Constantine the younger suffered Athanasius to return to his See, and commended him to the people of Alexandria. But shortly after he was again expelled by the Emperor Constantius, who favoured the Arians, and barely escaped with his life; he hid himself for a long time in a dark cave, where some of the faithful ministered to him. His retreat was, however, discovered by the Arians, and he would have fallen into their hands had he not been able to elude them again in a wonderful manner. In the great Synod of Sardica, A.D. 347, the Arian party were again condemned, and the Nicene Creed approved: and the Emperor Constantius threatened to declare war against Constantius if St. Athanasius and the other orthodox Bishops were not restored to their Sees. Political changes, however, arising, Athanasius was again and again obliged to fly from Alexandria. Five times in all had he to leave the people, and was oftentimes in much privation and danger of his life. And yet his firmness was in

the end the main instrument under God in establishing the true faith for which, at the first, he so wisely and boldly contended.

Athanasius lived to a good age, and saw the blessed fruit of his faithfulness and undaunted courage, for in the year 363, he could write and say that the Nicene Faith was approved by all Churches in the world; in Spain, Britain, Gaul, Italy, Dalmatia, Dacia, Mysia, Macedonia, Greece, Africa, Sardinia, Cyprus, Crete, Pamphylia, Lycia, Isauria, Egypt, Lybia, Pontus, Capadocia, and throughout the East, except in a few places which followed the heresy of Arius. (Ep: ad: Jov: p. 781.) In the next three great General Councils, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, and in many more, the Nicene Creed was for the most part the first thing they severally confirmed: and during this period it was that the Faith of Christ's divinity became interwoven in the services of the Church for the use of perpetual generations, as in that sweetest hymn of praise, the *Te Deum*, where we acknowledge Christ as "the Everlasting Son of the Father."

This Arian heresy was but one of the many severe trials that the Church of those early times had to pass through, even after it had been enfranchised. There were others of a like character, which we need only briefly touch upon in passing. When the family of Constantine passed away, Theodosius the Great succeeded to the government of the Empire, who was like another Constantine in favouring the Christians and upholding the rule and faith of the Church. But

political changes, and adverse circumstances, were continually reminding her that she was still militant upon earth, and must still contend for the Faith, order, and unity of the Church. Worldly rulers were not always to be depended upon, or trusted even when they seemed upon the whole to take the part of the orthodox Christians. Sometimes they were in favour of the heresies that sprang up; at other times they were indifferent, and Paganism again began to rear its head and contend with Christianity.

Besides, many insincere, perverse, worldly, and ambitious men, had now crept into the Church, and by craft and improper means got into high places, and were both a trouble and injury to the Christian religion. Some of them took up one or other of the many heresies that arose, so that in some places nearly the whole Church was corrupted; and had it not been for a few faithful and undaunted defenders, such as St. Athanasius, and the two Alexanders,—as after them, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and St. Augustine, and as before this time, there had been St. Ignatius, Irenæus, and Cyprian—the Canons for preserving order and unity in the Church, as well as the Christian Faith would often have been set aside and overthrown. But such men as these, of blessed memory, whose praise is in all the Church, were like those faithful servants of whom our Saviour speaks, who were found watching, and would not suffer the house committed to their charge to be broken through, to let in improper

persons. They stood boldly in the breach, when the enemy would have forced a way in, and would not suffer the heritage of the Lord—the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts to be trodden down and made common ground.

Among the several heresies that troubled the Church after Arianism, was the Macedonian, which attacked the true doctrine concerning the Third Person of the Divine Trinity, as Arianism had attacked the Second Person. For Macedonius denied the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, making Him to be but the servant or drudge of the Father, or only as a Divine energy, everywhere diffused throughout the world. Macedonius had been an Arian; and during the rule of Constantius, who supported the Arians, had been elected Archbishop of Constantinople, while the lawfully appointed Bishop was in the exercise of his office, who was put into a vessel and deported into banishment. Shortly afterwards Macedonius, who had persecuted the orthodox Christians and caused the death of several who stood up for their own Bishop in exile, was deposed by a Synod of Bishops, and compelled to leave Constantinople. To Arianism he had added the heresy as named against the Holy Ghost, the which he and those who adhered to these views endeavoured to propagate in every direction: and thereby caused much trouble and dissension in the Church: for many people had been led away by these novel and dangerous doctrines. And so it was that to promote the peace and unity of the Church, the Emperor

Theodosius, who had but lately come to power, commanded a General Council to be called at Constantinople. The Bishops, chiefly of the Eastern Church, where these heresies had so greatly disturbed the tranquility and order of the Church, assembled A.D. 381. Few of the Western Bishops, if any, were present, and the Bishop of Rome was not even represented, but yet the decrees of the Council were generally accepted by them.

The Arian and Macedonian Bishops, to the number of thirty-six, came to this Second General Council: and every means were used to persuade them to embrace the orthodox faith, but neither admonition nor reprehension would prevail with them, but instead they endeavoured to overthrow what had been already decreed. They said flatly, that rather than subscribe to the Nicene faith, they would hold with Arius. And when they had made this declaration they departed from the Council, left Constantinople, and sent letters abroad to every city that they should in no wise consent unto the Faith of the Nicene Council. The Bishops remaining, to the number of one hundred and fifty, then consulted together, and added further words to the Nicene Creed, relative to the true faith in the Holy Ghost, both with regard to His Personality and His Divinity. The additional words relative to Him were, that He was "the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets." And in the earlier

part of the Creed had inserted that Christ "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary," instead of *born of the Virgin Mary*: to show that the Holy Ghost existed before the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The words, "*and the Son*," in speaking of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father, were not then added; but were afterwards introduced by a later Western Council, and generally accepted in the West, though not in the East. For the Eastern Church felt that the Western had no right to make this addition to the Creed, nor had they, without their consent. Besides which, though it be true that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Son as well as the Father, yet it was in a different way. Hence this point became a matter of contention between the East and West; which to this day is not settled.

The hundred and fifty Bishops decreed also at this Council, that the Bishop of Constantinople should have next prerogative after the Bishop of Rome: the reason alleged being, because it was called *New Rome*. Again they ratify the Faith of the Nicene Council. They divide Provinces and ordain Patriarchs. They decree that no Bishop shall leave his own Diocese, and intermeddle with foreign Churches. At the same time they defined the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, and that of other leading Bishops, more particularly in the East, which called for their decision, that there might be no encroachment upon the territory belonging to another,

and thereby preventing disturbance and quarrelling. (Socrates Lib. v. cap. 8.)

The Council informed the Emperor of their decisions and the Canons they had framed for the good of the Church, requesting him to confirm them. This he did by publishing an edict, containing what the Church in Council had decreed, at the same time enjoining all the Churches to be handed over only to those Bishops who received the doctrines and Canons of Nice and Constantinople. Though both the heresies of Arius and Macedonius still continued to annoy the Church, they soon after this began to wane, and were generally regarded as errors outside the Church, whose adherents had no right to be considered members of it. This may be the spot to notice a little incident that took place a year or two afterwards, illustrative of those words of our Lord, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Some of the Arian and Macedonian Bishops again tried to make interest with the Emperor that they might be restored. And during their pleading, the Bishop of Iconium entered the Palace, and on coming into the presence of Theodosius made the usual obeisance to him, but took no notice of Arcadius, his son, standing at his side. Whereupon the Emperor reproved him for this; when the Bishop said, "You see, Sire, how impatient you are that your son should not be slighted; much more will God punish those who refuse due honour to His only begotten Son." (Theod. v. 16.)

Some time after this, from the beginning of the next century, other troubles crowded upon the Church in various parts; owing to the decay of the Roman Empire. When its forces were withdrawn, the people of various countries were little prepared to defend themselves, and they became an easy prey to the barbarous nations of the Goths, Vandals, Huns, and Saxons. The Churches of Italy, Spain, and Africa, of Germany and Britain, suffered terribly at their hands, and were almost crushed or driven into other places by their heathen conquerors. In Gaul and the adjoining countries, the Goths and Vandals, who had no regard for religion or the feelings of humanity, committed the most atrocious acts of cruelty against the Christians. Rome was taken, pillaged, and burnt to the ground by the Visigoths under Alaric. The Vandals ravaged Spain, and established a Kingdom of their own in this country. They passed into Africa; and Genseric took Carthage. Attila, chief of the Huns, ravaged nearly all Europe, and obtained the surname of "the scourge of God."

When the Romans were compelled to withdraw their forces from this country, Britain was harassed and oppressed by the Picts and Scots, at that time a ferocious people: and feeling their weakness, called in the help of the Saxons—a most disastrous step; since these people aimed at nothing less than to subdue the ancient inhabitants, or drive them out: and though the contest was long and severe, the Britons were compelled at last to yield and seek

safety elsewhere. The Churches were levelled to the ground; immense numbers of Christians were put to cruel deaths; and the rest fled away. In time, some of these heathen Anglo-Saxons were converted to Christianity, but in many cases it was of a loose and unsettled character, so that there were frequent relapses into barbarism. Eventually, however, the people embraced Christianity most gladly, and became devoted members of the Church, which they supported with no niggard hand.

While Christianity had to endure these grievous afflictions, worse than the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt, internal troubles still disturbed the Church. The next dangerous heresy to be noticed that infected the Christian Church was the Pelagian. The false doctrines it advanced were these:—

- (1) That Adam was by nature mortal; and whether he had sinned or not, would certainly have died.
- (2) That the consequences of Adam's sin were confined to his own person.
- (3) That new born infants are in the same condition as Adam before the fall.
- (4) That the law qualified men for the kingdom of heaven, and was founded upon equal promises with the Gospel.
- (5) That the general resurrection of the dead does not follow in virtue of our Saviour's resurrection.
- (6) That the grace of God is given according to *our* merits.
- (7) That our victory over temptation is gained not by the grace of God, but by the exercise of our will. And when we consider how these errors—arising from the ingenuity

of man's perverse reasoning—so largely went to undermine several fundamental doctrines of God's revealed Word, and especially endeavoured to overthrow our belief in the general corruption of our human nature, we shall not wonder that it greatly agitated the minds of those who were the guardians of the Church's Faith in those early days.

Pelagius had been born in Britain and educated in the great monastery at Bangor, and with him was joined Celestius, an Irishman, who travelled with him into other lands. They were men of considerable talent, and of pious behaviour. They fixed their head quarters at Rome, and there developed and propounded their novel views, until the Gothic invasion, A.D. 410, when they retired to Palestine, and later on to Carthage. Their errors for a time greatly affected the British Christians, and the Church procured the help of some Bishops of Gaul, Germanus and Lupus, to come to their assistance; who, in various places, boldly opposed the heresy wherever it appeared to have gained any ground. At St. Albans there was a great gathering of both sides—of those opposed to it and those in favour of it—who listened to the words of these able and learned Bishops, when the people with almost one voice pronounced in favour of the orthodox belief. And thus, for a time at least, the Pelagian heresy dwindled away.

The great champion, however, against Pelagianism was the celebrated St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. He

easily vanquished the heresy in his own country: but not content with this, he went forth and encountered it wherever it seemed to be gaining ground. He followed the teachers of these errors into the East, and then to Rome, where they still hoped to establish their views. Trusting too much to human reason as to what was right, rather than to the teaching of God's word, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the Bishop of Rome became infected with the views of Pelagius. At an assembly of Bishops at Jerusalem, Pelagius was accused of the errors he propagated, and though he was banished it was without censure, and without condemning the doctrines he taught. And, gained over by specious arguments the Bishop of Rome pronounced in his favour, declared the party of Palagius sound in the faith; and persecuted their adversaries. St. Augustine, with a number of African Bishops who supported him, were nothing daunted, however, and continued persistently to uphold the orthodox view, and endeavoured by their arguments, earnest entreaties, and the letters they wrote, to strengthen it. Zosimus, the Bishop of Rome, at last yielded to their increasing efforts, began to see the doctrines in another light, "changed his mind, and condemned with the utmost severity Palagius and Celestius, whom he had honoured with his approbation, and covered with his protection." Eventually the heresy was formally condemned at the next General Council, held at Ephesus A.D. 431. In short, the Gauls, the Britons, and Africans, by their Councils, and the

Emperors by their edicts and penal laws, demolished this sect in its infancy, and suppressed it entirely before it had acquired any tolerable degree of vigour or consistence. (Mosheim.)

The Church had also been much distracted by the Donatist *schism*; which pretended to a rule of greater sanctity than that exercised in the Church; they were the Puritans of those times, and caused great dissension and division: they had other Bishops, where Bishops already existed; they re-baptized those who joined them, though they had been baptized in the Church: and though they are not accused of holding false doctrines, yet they regarded their faction as the true spiritual body, and held no communion with the Church. They had a Bishop even in Rome, and four hundred elsewhere. For a time their doctrine seemed to prosper, till a schism arose among themselves, which caused them to turn against each other. The Emperor also enjoined that a Conference should be held in Africa, where the Donatists were numerous, between the contending parties, nearly the same in number on both sides, where for three days the matter was warmly discussed, and the necessity of some agreement with the Church was forcibly urged, for the sake of unity: when the decision was given against the Donatists. They appealed to the Emperor, but he would not listen to them: he insisted upon their conformity. The decision of the Conference and the fear of the Emperor's displeasure induced many to return to the Church: for he

enacted the severest penalties against those who remained obstinate, and persisted in their rebellion. Many of the ringleaders fled and otherwise secreted themselves, and others professed submission, but with mental reservation.

St Augustine, however, by his discourses in various places, and by his forcible writings, resolutely attacked the wantonness of the schism, and the needless disorder the faction was introducing among Christians, destroying the very appearance of unity among them. And so vigorously did he expose their dangerous and seditious spirit, that he greatly lessened their popularity in Africa, and effectually dispelled any sympathy for the party in many other parts of Christendom.

This was a period, as we have said, in which the Church was greatly tried by various kinds of heresies. There is no need to enumerate them all: it will be sufficient if a few more be named that gave rise to much dissension. The Apollinarian heresy consisted in maintaining that Christ was not endowed with a human soul, but that the divine nature occupied the place, and performed its functions; hence arose a *confusion* in the faith as to the two natures of our Lord. This was condemned by the heads of the Church in various places as contrary to the true doctrine that she held. It seemed however, to be the occasion of producing another heresy of a somewhat similar character, but taking an opposite view of the Person of Christ; which led to great and wide dissension in

different parts, and this was the Nestorian heresy. Nestorius had been elected Bishop of Constantinople, and being wishful to be considered learned, as well as zealous for the Faith, contended against Apollinarianism, and was so desirous of inculcating a distinction of the two natures in Christ, so as to avoid the error of confusing them, that he went to the extreme on the other side, and virtually taught that not only had Christ two natures, but that he was a compound of two Persons, instead of holding the right faith, that the two perfect natures of God and Man were mysteriously joined together in the single Person of our Lord and Saviour.

He contended that the blessed Virgin Mary should not be styled *Theotokos*, the mother of God, but simply *the mother of Christ*: implying that the Person of the Godhead was distinct from the Person of the Manhood, and that Christ was not one altogether by unity of Person. Whereas to believe rightly concerning the Incarnation of our Lord, we are to acknowledge, that "although He be God and Man; yet He is not two, but one Christ." This is a great mystery, that cannot be reasoned about, but simply accepted as the revelation of God's word, where He is always spoken of as one Person. Thus, "the Word that was with God," and "*was God*," "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld *His* glory)." (St. John i. 1, 14.) Clearly then God and Man was but one Person in Christ. Then again, St. Paul, speaking of the united body of Christians, calls it, "the Church

of God, which He hath purchased with His Blood." (Acts xx. 28.) Whose Blood was it? Plainly Christ's, and plainly *one Person*, though He be God and Man.

Great excitement was occasioned in Constantinople by the sermons which Nestorius, and those of his Clergy that took up the heresy, preached. They seemed vain of it as being a new discovery of truth through them, when it was only a corruption of it. And the orthodox section of Christians appealed to other leading Bishops of the Church to take the matter up, when both Celestine, Bishop of Rome, and Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, thought it their bounden duty to interfere. The latter had been exceedingly provoked by finding through the sermons of Nestorius, that were circulated, the heresy spreading among the Churches of Egypt, which it was his peculiar province to guard against any false doctrine.

Cyril, a man of great renown and determination, wrote several letters to Nestorius, confuting the views he propagated; but the latter stiffly withstood him, and would not yield one jot either unto Cyril or to Celestine. There being, then, no likelihood that matters could be adjusted and peace restored, application was made to the Emperor, now Theodosius the younger, to call a general Council of the Church together to settle the question. This the Emperor accordingly did.

He issued his orders to all the Metropolitans everywhere to come, with as many of their Bishops

as could be spared, to Ephesus by the Feast of Pentecost, A.D. 431. Nestorius, and the Bishops that sided with him, came first; then Cyril, with many of the Egyptian Bishops, appeared about Whitsuntide; and a few days afterwards came Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, and other Bishops of the East. But while John Bishop of Antioch, and others with him, lingered by the way, the business of the Council was entered upon; the appointed time of commencing being already past. Cyril was appointed President, and while the majority of those present affirmed that Christ was God, Nestorius refused, saying, "I verily will not call him God who grew to man's estate, by two months and three months, and so forth;" meaning that Christ was a distinct person from the Son of God, who was manifested as in Christ. Nestorius then withdrew from the Council with his party, finding that he was greatly in the minority. When his case was further entered upon, the Council called Nestorius before them; but he sent word that he would defer the hearing of his case till John of Antioch appeared. The Council, however, having cited him a second and a third time, proceeded with their business. Portions of the sermons which Nestorius had preached, and had been sent abroad to different Churches, were read, and finding that he had disseminated what was contrary to the true faith as it had been received, and to which he obstinately held, he was formally deposed from his Bishopric. Nestorius and the Bishops who held with him, not to be behind hand,

held a Council by themselves, and deposed Cyril and Memnon, Bishop of Ephesus, who had signed the act of deposition: yet there were 198 out of the 200 that had also signed it.

Shortly afterwards, John of Antioch and his company arrived, and he strongly condemned Cyril for being in such a haste to depose Nestorius; and great contention arose therefrom; John refusing to hold communion with Cyril, and Cyril with John; and yet, after their return home to their several Dioceses, they became reconciled to each other, and John of Antioch admitted the justice of the decrees of the Council of Ephesus, and consented thereto. Nestorius, during the contention, hoping to avoid the penalty of deposition, intimated that he was willing to recant. "Let Mary," he said, "be called *Theotokos*, and I pray you no longer to conceive displeasure against me." But the feeling of the Council was that he said not this from his heart, or truly repented of his error, but to escape punishment; therefore the sentence was not reversed, but was afterwards confirmed by the Emperor, who banished Nestorius to a distant country, where after some years he died. (Socrates Lib. VII. cap. 33.)

But, alas, it was some time before peace—in the East, at least—could be restored to the Church! Many of the people, and some of the Clergy, of Constantinople and the neighbouring towns, still held with the errors of their banished Bishop; as also did those in other parts. While at the same time the

orthodox Clergy felt it to be their duty to preach against it. And some denounced it with such vehemency, that they were thereby led to go beyond the true faith into the opposite extreme, and recklessly developed the somewhat obscure heresy of Apollinaris. The leader of this intemperate party was Eutyches an Abbot of Constantinople. Therefore Flavianus called a provincial Council and Eutyches was sent for, who reasoned in favour of the new heresy which he propounded. "For" said he "I confess that our Lord consisted of two natures before the divinity was coupled with the humanity, but after the uniting of them, I affirm that he had but one nature:" he moreover said that "the body of the Lord was *not* of the same substance as ours." Whereupon he was degraded for preaching and teaching false doctrine. The matter was not, however, suffered to rest.

There had occasionally been a jealousy between the other leading Churches, and that of Constantinople. The jealousy of Old Rome, because New Rome, or Constantinople, had been invested with an authority equal to hers; and in the others because precedence had been given to it before that of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch. And on the present occasion they united to sift out the doings of the Bishop of Constantinople with regard to Eutyches. The Emperor therefore, consented to the calling of another Council at Ephesus, A.D. 449: and commanded that the sentence against Eutyches should be suspended; and my will is, he says, that those who joined in his condemnation

be present, and that they wait for the general and common sentence of the most holy Fathers, seeing that their doings are now called in question. Dioscorus, who succeeded Cyril in the Bishopric of Alexandria, was appointed president, Domnus who succeeded John in the Church of Antioch was there; so was Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem; and Julius represented the Bishop of Rome. And of course Flavianus of Constantinople with the Bishops of his Province, were present in obedience to the will of the Emperor. The issue was, that Dioscorus, who favoured the heresy, with such Bishops as were of his opinion, restored Eutyches to his former dignity. And proceeded further to depose Flavianus and several other Bishops who did not hold with them: and among these was Domnus, the Primate of Antioch, who evidently had not consented to their deeds and counsel. It is questioned whether the representative of the Bishop of Rome did agree also. (Evagrius Scholasticus Lib. I. Cap. 10.) This Council of the Church was never generally received; and was afterwards stigmatised as *An assembly of Robbers*; Mosheim says "to signify that everything was carried in it by fraud and violence. And," he adds, "many Councils, indeed, both in this and the following ages, are equally entitled to the same dishonourable appellation." Hence we learn that Councils (for as much as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God), can, and do err, even in things pertaining to God. (See Art. of Rel. XXI.)

The Church was now more disquieted and disunited than ever. Martian had now succeeded Theodosius the younger as Emperor, and was regarded as a lover of piety and justice. Many of the Bishops were greatly exasperated at what had been done; and Leo, the Bishop of Rome, to whom Flavianus had appealed, made complaint to the New Emperor that Dioscorus, the President of the late Council, had not acted fairly or according to the true and right faith; and had made light of what he proposed. Many others came and represented the injuries and the disgrace they had been subjected to, and requested that a General Council might be called to hear their several cases; and settle all differences for the peace of the Church. Martian willingly consented, and called the celebrated Council of Chalcedon together, A.D. 451, which has always been regarded as the *Fourth* Œcumenical Council. The number of Bishops that attended are said to have been six hundred and thirty, the largest number by far that had yet assembled at any Synod of the Church from all parts.

The Bishop of Rome wanted to have it held in Italy, but the Emperor decided that it should be held at Chalcedon; not far from Constantinople, even within sight of the city. A long and enthusiastic account of the Church in which the Fathers assembled is given by Evagrius. (Lib. II. c. 3.) And as Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome, had particularly interested himself in the matter, and was in high esteem, the Emperor requested that his legates should preside.

Leo had also forwarded a copy of his letter to Flavianus, desiring that it should be received without question, as the standard of doctrine, relative to the Incarnation of our Lord, which, though very excellent and thoroughly orthodox, was not so received until it had been submitted for examination and approved by the Council. Thus showing that the Faith should be settled by the authority of the Council, and not by the Bishop of Rome. A copy of the Gospels was placed in the midst of the assembly upon a raised table. And the proceedings were conducted with great regularity and with much spirit.

The Council confirmed the confession or definition of Faith as set forth in the Creed as accepted by the three preceding General Councils of Nice, Constantinople, and Ephesus. It approved the Epistles of Cyril of Alexandria, and that of Leo of Rome. It condemned Eutyches, and Dioscorus, Bishop of Alexandria, degrading the one and deposing the other; and annulled the decrees of "the Robber's Assembly," as the Synod was called over which Dioscorus presided. It may be interesting to note the doctrine as defined by the Council on the disputed points, which is as follows:—"We confess, and with one accord teach, one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; perfect in divinity, perfect in humanity; truly God, truly man; consisting of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like to us,

without sin: Who was begotten of the Father, before all ages, according to the Godhead: and in the last days, the same was born, according to the manhood, of Mary the Virgin, Mother of God, for us and our salvation; Who is to be acknowledged one and the same Christ, the Son, the Lord, the only begotten, in two natures, without mixture, change, division, or separation; the difference of natures not being removed by their union, but rather the property of each nature is preserved, and concur in *one* aspect and person. So that He is not separated and divided into two persons, but is one and the same only Son, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ."

Upon its being finally settled and read out, all the Bishops cried out,—This is the Faith of the Fathers; let the Metropolitans subscribe in the presence of the magistrates; what has been defined admits of no delay: this is the faith of the Apostles, we all follow it. The Magistrates, nineteen in number, being the chief officers of the Empire, said, what the Fathers have decreed, and with which everybody is satisfied, shall be brought before the Emperor.

On the occasion of the sixth session, the Emperor came in person to the Council. He made a speech in Latin to the Fathers, this being the language of the Empire, which was afterwards interpreted in Greek. And it is important to notice what he says, because it shows that the civil power still did not attempt to coerce the Church, but left her entirely free to settle her own affairs and to define the Faith in those

disputed points which gave rise to so much ill feeling and controversy: and that the civil power only came forward to further the lawful decisions of the Church, and to see that they were established, so as to prevent further disturbance. For Martian told them, that his design in convening the Council was, to preserve the purity of the Faith, which had been sometimes changed by the avarice and passions of certain persons. He said, that no other belief concerning the mystery of the Incarnation should be entertained, (that is in the Church), but what had been taught by the Fathers of Nice, and according to what Leo had written to Flavianus, the late Bishop of Constantinople. He declared that after the example of Constantine, his desire of assisting at the Council was only to establish the Faith, and not to show his power; and finally exhorted the Fathers sincerely to explain the Faith agreeably to what they had received by tradition.

The Emperor then asked the Council if they all agreed to the Confession of Faith, that had been handed to him; when all the Bishops cried out, "We all agree to this: we have all voluntarily subscribed." Upon which the Emperor exclaimed; "The Catholic Faith having been declared, we think it just and expedient to take away all pretence of division for the future. Whosoever, therefore, shall raise a disturbance (*i.e.*, with regard to the Faith), if he is a private person he shall be expelled the imperial city; if an officer discharged; if he be a Clergyman, he shall be deposed, and subject to other punishment."

The Emperor further said: "There are some articles which we have reserved, out of respect to you, thinking it more proper to have them canonically ordained in Council, rather than commanded by our laws." These were that no one, or no body of men should build a monastery without the Bishop's leave; and that the monks in the city as well as in the country should be subject to the Bishop and live in quiet. This was ordained because some persons under pretence of embracing a monastic life, thought themselves independent of the Bishop, and brought disturbance into both Church and State. Secondly, no Clergyman or monk should out of avarice engage in secular affairs. Thirdly, that the Clergyman engaged in the service of one Church, should not without the Bishop's leave be appointed to the Church of another city.

Another matter of some moment was also determined upon, in agreement with what had been decreed in the former Council of Constantinople, which gave the second place of honour to this city because of its being *New Rome*, for they ordained that the Archbishop of Constantinople ought "to be magnified in ecclesiastical matters, even like the elder Imperial Rome, as being next to it;" and gave him the right of ordaining Metropolitans in and over all the Dioceses of Asia, Pontus, and Thrace. The legates of Rome protested against this, as having been passed in their absence, but the Council replied that they had the previous day been summoned to the meeting, and it

was adjudged that the Canon should still be received : which was accordingly accepted by all present in spite of the legates, who had desired to have their protest against it recorded. Leo was indignant when he became acquainted with the terms of this XXVIIIth Canon, and in a series of letters denounced it ; though neither by his legates, nor in his own name, did he ever seem to object to the IXth and XVIIth Canons of this Council, authorising appeals to the See of Constantinople far more fully than the Sardican Canons had to Rome. (Bev. II. 115-6.) Yet these form part of the twenty-seven subscribed to by all, including the legates, and received by the Churches in the West. The first of which decreed that "The Canons of the Holy Fathers, made in every Synod to this present time, be in full force." Or, in other words, should be the code or law of the Universal Church.

Leo pretended that the new Canon contradicted the decree of the Nicene Council, by subjecting Alexandria and Antioch to Constantinople ; and he declared it to be annulled by the authority of St. Peter. This is the first time in which this plea of St. Peter's authority, as belonging solely to the Bishop of Rome, appears. With a bold disregard of history, he denied that the precedence of Sees had depended on the importance of the cities in which they were. He asserted that the Canon of the Council of Constantinople had never been acted on or notified to the See of Rome, although sufficient evidence to the contrary could be adduced. He loudly complained of

the ambition of Anatolius, Archbishop of Constantinople, whom he charged with ingratitude for the favour shown him by the Roman acknowledgment of him: he suspended intercourse with him, and threatened to excommunicate him. Alas! he could not see himself as others saw him. But finding that his lofty pretensions were held of no account, he affected to regard some conciliatory words which he received from Anatolius a few years after, as a retraction of the conduct that had so offended him; and the Patriarch of Constantinople was re-admitted to his correspondence. Although some of the more extravagant writers in the interest of Rome profess to suppose that the Emperor abrogated the 28th Canon by an imperial law, there is no ground whatever for such a supposition; but it is certain that the Canon, from the time of its enactment was steadily enforced by the Eastern court. (Robertson's Ch. Hist.; Smith's Dict. Chris. Antiq.; Hook Eccl. Biog. Eutyches.)

More than an hundred years now transpire before anything like another General Council is called. But these four General Councils to which our attention has been drawn, are the most important of all, in many respects. Not only on account of their being the earliest of those where the representatives of the Christian Church assembled from various parts of the world, but because the faith as defined by them, and the Canons which they passed, were generally accepted by the Church throughout the world; and

recognised as *the basis of true unity for all Christians*. Great and vital differences had arisen, and caused great disorder and division for a time, so that it might be said that there seemed to be but little unity among Christians during the period of these Councils; but yet these very contentions were conducive to it; the causes of discord and division were not allowed to remain, to corrupt and separate the members of the Church; but they were thoroughly searched into, warmly discussed, as by men deeply interested in preserving the unity of the Christian Church according to the will of their divine Lord; and what was wrong and evil they condemned, and provided safeguards, and means of avoiding them in future; and thus terms of agreement were laid down, and accepted by all Christians who desired to abide in the unity of the Church of Christ.

Moreover, these four General Councils had, upon the whole, been conducted with great fairness and justice; notwithstanding the heat of debate and the uproars that arose at times. They were not only open to the representatives of the Christian Church from all parts of the world, but those who had given the offence and been the cause of discord and division were suffered to appear at these General Councils, and speak in their own defence: and being oftentimes men of perverse minds, and obstinate wills, they would frequently provoke the indignation of the Fathers who listened to them. Those who sat on thrones, however, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,

as the Christian Church was denominated by Christ Himself, were free, every one, to speak their own minds, their views and sentiments; and to tell their brethren what was the Faith or the custom of the Church in their part of the world, as it had been received among them: and each having an independent voice and vote, they were the better able to come to a *consensus* of agreement, with great, and at times overpowering unanimity; which gave immense weight to their decision; so that they felt that the Holy Ghost was with them of a truth.

Thus, one and the same Faith was established, and defined, and safeguarded, on the most important points where it had been assailed. The Canons that were passed in those Councils were the standing rules for preserving order in the Church everywhere, keeping the Bishops of every degree to their own respective jurisdictions, according to ancient customs; not suffering them unnecessarily to intrude into the province or sphere of another; for this was the principle of their action: defining their duties, and that of the Clergy, and of the Laity as well; so that as far as possible, the outward machinery of the Church might everywhere be worked smoothly without a jar or disturbance, and the great mission of preaching the Gospel and winning souls for Christ might be zealously pursued without distraction or any quarrelling between them. Provision was also made for rectifying evils that might arise, adjusting differences, and correcting offences by the meeting of Diocesan and

Provincial Councils, which the Canons directed should assemble regularly under their respective Bishops, Metropolitans, and Patriarchs.

There seemed, besides, no question about the Government of the Church. It was taken for granted, on all occasions, as if there were not a doubt or dispute about it that it was Episcopal, and that it had always been so ; and that there had never been any other rule but this in Christ's Church for Christians. And what is very remarkable and worthy of note in these days ; it was universally accepted by heretics and schismatics, as well as by the orthodox, as *the only kind of Church Government* that could be received by Christians, since all believed that it had been ordained by Christ and His Apostles. In those early days, even those who corrupted the doctrine of the Church seldom or never breathed anything against the authority of Episcopal rule as derived from Apostolical appointment. To do so, says a learned writer, if they possibly could, would have been greatly to their purpose ; because one very plain argument by which their misrepresentations of doctrine used to be confuted, was, by appealing to the traditional accounts of the same doctrines, preserved in many of the most famous Churches, by means of *the regular succession of Bishops*. The heretics who disputed the Faith on some one point or another, would, no doubt, have been too happy, could they have proved that there had been any other kind of Government in the Church, that the succession of Bishops from the

Apostles themselves was not clearly made out, or that being made out, it signified nothing. But the ground they took was very different. They never dreamed of denying the *past* succession or authority of the Bishops: it was too certainly known to be denied: but they took very good care to secure a *future* succession for themselves, whenever they could. They hardly ever broke off from the Church, until they had got some Bishop, who had erred, to patronize their heresy: through whom they might continue the Apostolical commission in a line of Pastors of their own. Thus it was with the Novations, the Arians, the Macedonians, and Nestorians; and now that Dioscorus had been cast out of the Church, he became the leader of the Monophysites.

Thus the enemies of the Church, as well as her friends, bore witness in those early days to a truth which too many of both parties seem now agreed on forgetting: That *Episcopal authority is the very bond, ordained by Christ and His Apostles, for uniting Christians to one another and to Christ*: so that it became a kind of axiom with them, *Do nothing in the Church without the Bishop*. As the Fathers in these Councils did not make any additional article of Faith, but only defined what had existed before from the beginning, when attempts were made to corrupt any of them, and declared the right view in which the articles of Faith had been received. As they did not on any of these occasions attempt to make a new Constitution for the Church; but confirmed what

existed among them, and which they had inherited from the beginning: keeping as much as possible to the ancient rules, and customs, and principles that had ever been preserved in the Church; so in these Councils the government of the Church by Bishops was universally acknowledged by all classes, as the only one that had ever been known since the days of the Apostles; so much so that not a question between this and any other was ever brought forward or broached by the opponents of the Church. What testimony to the authority of the Episcopacy can be stronger than this?

Another matter which rendered these four great Ecumenical Councils of the Church of greater moment than any others, was that none were so universally received, so constantly acted on, or so fully represented the mind of the Church, as these. The Fifth and Sixth were also generally received, though accounted of much less moment; and then ensues a marked difference in those that followed. The Empire of Rome was greatly diminished, and its power was weakened while losing hold of many of its vast territories. The very countries where the Faith bore rule were soon occupied by heathen tribes which came to ravage and possess the lands; and the very languages in which Christ was made known and in which He was worshipped, became changed. "Henceforth," as it was said, "Christendom was divided among so many nations, that never since that time have its Bishops assembled with one consent, for the

confirmation of truth, or the removal of error; nor is it likely that they will meet again, till they are all gathered to render an account of their stewardship before the Son of Man."

It was a very fortunate, nay, shall we not say, a Providential thing, that for a few hundred years after the freedom and establishment of Christianity by Constantine, that these various heresies and schism arose at a time when the whole Church, through its representatives could meet together in General Councils from all parts of the world to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel, and the Constitution of the Church; and that this interval could be used for settling *what was* the true Faith, and fixing upon a concordant system and practice, in agreement with Apostolic principles, whereby the basis of unity might be preserved among the Christians about to be dispersed among the various and unconnected tribes of the earth: and shall we not say it was equally important for the unity of modern Christendom as well? For how could such a basis have been afterwards secured, or, rather, made so manifest, unless it had been done by these Councils, before the breaking up of the Roman Empire, and the opportunity of holding such assemblies of the whole Church had passed away—a basis of such an authority that it procured the almost universal acknowledgment of Christians, and continued as a lasting declaration or authoritative monument whereby true Christian unity should and could be upheld?

Nearly a hundred and fifty years after the assembling of the Council of Chalcedon, Gregory the Great—one of the most celebrated Bishops of Rome that ever sat upon its episcopal throne: the Gregory who sent Augustine to this country for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons—repeatedly declared that “he received and venerated *these four Councils* as he did the four books of the holy Evangelists;” and that “the fifth Council also (the last held up to his time) he regarded with equal veneration,”—(Epist. I. 25 ; III. 10 ; IV. 38 ; V. 51, 54)—alleging, as his ground for doing so, that they were “*Universali Constituta Consensu.*” What could be stronger than this in their support? Especially when you consider that at the last of these Councils, so numerous attended, some things were passed in opposition to the ambitious designs of the Roman See, which Leo at first denounced, but which he and his successors afterwards acknowledged to be the law of the Church.

The Fifth General Council, to which Gregory the Great alludes as having been held a little before his day, was convened by the Emperor Justinian, at Constantinople, in the year 553, in reference to the *Monophysite* heresy, which held that whether there were one or two natures in Christ, there was but *one will*; which the Council condemned as subversive of the true faith in Christ. They also condemned what were called “The Three Chapters,” or certain writings in favour of former heresies, which seemed to support the view of the Monophysites. Eutychius,

Patriarch of Constantinople, was President, though he and others entreated Vigilius, Bishop of Rome, who had come to Constantinople, to take that place; but though he was agreeable to the calling of the Council, yet for certain reasons of his own he would neither take the presidency, nor attend the Council, nor yet send a representative. The fact was, that though the Bishop of Rome had formerly condemned "The Three Chapters," he had since published his "Constitutum," defending certain positions that had been advanced in favour of receiving the Monophysites into the Church. This gave great offence to the Council and to the Emperor. The result was that the Council broke off all Church communion with Vigilius, the Bishop of Rome; and eventually in agreement with the will and decision of the Council, an Imperial mandate was issued ordaining that the name of Vigilius should be removed from the sacred diptychs for his tergiversations on the subject of "The Three Chapters;" "Non emin patiebamur, nec ab eo, nec ab alio quocunque," says the Emperor, "inviolatum communionem suscipere, qui non istam impietatem condemnat. . . . ne eo modo inveniamur Nestorii et Theodori impietati communicantes." For the Council, after it had come to a final decision, anathematized as usual those who would pervert the Faith of Christ, as received by the Church. Vigilius, after taking some time to consider, announced his assent to what the Council had done in two formal documents. The first, a decretal Epistle, addressed to the Patriarch of Constantinople

—(Mansi IX. 413-432)—in which he says, after the manner of St. Augustine, *he retracts all that he had ever written differently*; the other, a larger statement or treatise, in which he speaks of the question in the same light at greater length. Vigilius died on his way home to Rome; Pelagius I., his successor, acknowledged at once the authority of the Fifth Council; and so also did Pelagius II., whose acknowledgment of it is said to have been written by Gregory the Great, who was then a deacon of the Bishop's in Rome. (Gieseler's Eccl. Hist.; Smith's Dic. Christ. Antiq.) Gregory must therefore have been thoroughly acquainted with what had happened, and had obtained an intimate insight into the nature and merits of the new system of Popery that was arising in the Church. His judgment, then, is formed after due consideration, and with a full knowledge of the views held in the Catholic Church, and which had been held from the beginning. His principles, as enunciated in the letters he wrote respecting the government of the Church, were not arbitrary or capricious, but settled by fixed rules, as set forth in the first four Councils in the Church, and to which he added the fifth, as only confirming those that had gone before, notwithstanding the judgment of the Council against one of his predecessors.

One thing with regard to this Fifth General Council is well worth remembering respecting the basis of unity that had been so universally accepted throughout Christendom. Before ever they entered

upon the business for which they had been convened, "they pledged themselves to the exact doctrine and discipline laid down in the four General Councils, each and all, preceding their own; one and the same confession of faith had sufficed for them, in spite of all the heresies they had met to condemn, and should suffice now. All things in harmony with it should be received, and all things at variance with it rejected." If, then, the divers branches of the Church—although they had never been able to meet again as aforetime in a Council of the Universal Church—had remained steadfast to such an excellent and orthodox a decision or pledge as that of the Fifth, there would not have been the terrible discord and separation, the misery and bloodshed, which has almost rent the Church in pieces, and been so hurtful to her in many ways; for they would all have had one basis of true Christian unity, which would have kept all on the same lines of action, and kept them all together in one body, in the bonds of fraternal love and fellowship. There must not only be *one* body,—the Church, even as we are called in one hope of our calling: *but that body must be ONE* through Christ; or in other words, through the means He has ordained for this purpose; so that there be but one Faith, one Government, one set of general rules or Canons by which the Church everywhere throughout the world should abide; and thus be one. And it is to this end that all Christians, all branches and sections of the Church that would be perfect must ever aim.

CHAPTER X.

THE GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THIS BASIS OF UNITY.

THE struggle ended in strengthening and consolidating the basis of unity, which in simpler form had existed for Christians in the Church since the days of the Apostles. The struggle so constantly repeated, manifested for a time a certain want of unity—it was apparent that a certain class of men were frequently rising up and trying to upset this unity; but the struggle did not break up the unity; it would have been broken up if there had been no struggle; for the struggle took place that the basis of unity might still be upheld and maintained. It did not make the basis even less firm or less distinguishable: the nature and necessity of it, and the outlines of it, were the rather brought out more clearly to view, and it became more consolidated thereby; took deeper root, was not so liable to be shaken or moved, but was the better prepared to endure future struggles, like some young oak which had been subjected to the wintry blasts, and had passed through storm and tempest.

The rulers of the Church, to whom had been committed the guardianship of the Faith, and the upholding of order, with many true and good Christians who supported them, manfully stood in the breach, when perverse and unruly men made an

assault upon the bulwarks or defences of the Church. The object of the heresies and schisms that so often occurred was to overthrow and do away with the anciently established basis of unity; they wanted nothing to stand in the way of letting all Christians do and think what they liked; it was the thin end of the wedge of what is now called "religious liberty," whereby so much confusion has been introduced into Christianity, and which has done away with any standard or basis of unity, by means of which Christians might be one in every place, town, or village where they lived. Well, outside the Church they might change and turn about, and follow their own ways, and have what views of religion they liked; they might have religious liberty to their heart's content, no man forbidding them; but not inside the Church! No. Everyone who had been permitted to enter this Divine Society, and would continue faithful members of it, *must all think the same things* on all important points, and hold the right faith, as it was at the first delivered in its integrity and simplicity by the Apostles, and as their sacred writings testify—and, *they must all walk by the rule*, so that there be no divisions among them. For how else could they be one, as it was Christ's great desire that they should be?

When, then, cunning and designing men laboured to undermine the foundations of our holy Faith; or when ambitious and conceited men, seeking to advance themselves, or their own ideas and ways, sought to

set aside the rule and discipline of the Church, and make a breach in her defences, the noble defenders of the ancient Church stood in the gap, and built up her walls again and strengthened them; lest, if suffered to remain broken down, they would let in a flood of waters, as it were, and lay waste her fair heritage; and this was especially to be noticed, when some storm arose against her, in any popular enthusiasm for some error, in which the sovereigns and nobles of the people joined, and endeavoured to force the Church to comply with their demands. It was no easy task to withstand them. Those of a latitudinarian turn of mind—who, for temporary peace, and to make all things agreeable and smooth—who, to keep in with all sides, or especially with that party which the civil power favoured, which naturally carried great weight with it, would have sacrificed truth in some degree, or the rule of the Church in some way, whereby her unity would consequently be injured: these men would have proved unfaithful to the high and sacred trust committed to their charge, and suffered things to take their course and drift; and though for awhile—but only for awhile—no contention might have arisen, still the Church would have been overrun with error and disorder of all sorts, so that the humble-minded Christian would not have known what to believe, or have had confidence in what was the right way to take; while before long confusion and disturbance would run riot, making the Church little short of a perfect Babel.

The contentions and disputes that did arise to vex the Church, and sometimes waxed painfully hot, rousing the passions of the old man, were because those who desired to be loyal to Christ—faithful stewards of the mysteries of God, and of the unity for Christians, would not yield, no, not for a moment, or for any seeming advantage, to any of those subtle and specious devices of the enemy to corrupt the Faith, or set aside the rule and government of the Church, which they wanted to violate in some way, but stoutly resisted all attempts to do this. These valiant champions of the Church resolutely determined at all hazards, whatever they might be called upon to endure, not to give way, and suffer the heritage of the Lord to be laid waste. Whenever, then, the enemy seemed to come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord, in these men, lifted up a standard against him. They felt that they had a sacred duty to perform, difficult and oftentimes most disagreeable, from which the common run of men, who loved their ease and had mistaken notions of liberality, would have shrunk back; but they did what under the most solemn obligations they were bound to do, not fearing temporal consequences. They feared most lest they should become perfidious servants of their Lord, whom they had promised to serve and obey in all things—they feared lest they should act like that servant who *knew* his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, who should "be beaten with many stripes." And besides this, they felt that they

had something worth fighting for, both for themselves and the souls they had to watch over; and which it was their duty to hand down to future generations inviolate. Hence through the valiant struggles and battles which these true and devoted men encountered, truth and order were maintained in the Church, the Apostolic foundation, or the basis of unity for Christians everywhere, was preserved to us in all its integrity.

The dauntless courage and faithfulness of these men inspired others also with like feelings: those who were put in charge of the Church in various parts of the world, even to the most distant outposts, felt animated by their example; and calling to mind that they were the Lord's *watchmen* as well as *remembrancers*, they stood firm to the sacred principles and trust they had received, and manfully defended the frontiers of the Church against all invading foes, that would have trodden down its Faith, its order and constitution, and thereby destroyed its unity. Outward troubles were multiplied, nations were invaded by heathen hordes, the inhabitants driven into exile, great cities were sacked, and other races came into possession of what did not belong to them; then there were reprisals of a terrible character; so that everything seemed unsettled and uncertain in the world around: but one thing that kept society in any degree together, and softened the untamed passions of barbarians, was the civilising and sanctifying influence of Christianity, and the unity which largely pervaded

the Church at this period of its history. Here and then there, the conversion of the heathen took place; and the great work of the Church was to bring about peace and unity wherever it could: its labour was often overthrown, but it still pursued its course: and the strong feeling and desire that pervaded the Church at this time to uphold its unity by having one and the same Faith, one and the same government, one and the same rule for preserving order throughout the Churches in every part, contributed in no small degree to restore a better understanding and more brotherly feeling among differing nations and races of men. The basis of unity having been strengthened and consolidated by the struggles it had passed through, the rulers of the Church were the more resolved to abide by it, and promote it severally, not only among their own people, but to keep in touch and be one with their brethren in other parts of the world, walking by the same rule, and all holding to the great truths of the Gospel, as set down in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds.

The means of spreading abroad, and carrying to others in distant parts, the basis of unity whereby Christians were bound together in one body, were gradually opened out. The Councils always published their decrees and Canons for the Churches to keep. They were delivered or taken by the Metropolitans first, who were charged to see that the Bishops of their respective provinces had copies of them; then the several Bishops informed their Clergy; and

through them, as well as through the Bishops, the more important and intelligent of the laity heard what had been done. The heresies and schisms which had so abounded and vexed the Church now began to decline, and ceased, in a great measure, to exercise that hold over the people that they had done; and although they still existed, and new ones, from time to time, cropped up, yet those who held them were distinctly recognised as outside the Church: and those Christians that belonged to the Church were the more mindful to keep to the basis of unity which had been more distinctly marked out by those in authority. Church people were warned everywhere to avoid these errors and separations; they were exhorted to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as a mark and badge of their being true followers of Christ, distinguishing them from those who followed their own ways and views, or of some one whom the Church had condemned for doing wrong: and they were taught to value exceedingly the privilege and blessing that would arise from their keeping to this basis of unity which the Church maintained in despite of all its foes and trials.

It was, as we have said, a time when Christian nations were infested by hordes of savage heathens, who pillaged and destroyed the people without mercy, so that their only hope was often in flight. In some parts, Christianity seemed almost extinct, or was hidden in secret places. But those who fled to other countries, not only carried with them the Word of

truth, but the principles of Gospel unity. A little community or brotherhood was formed wherever they were, for they were still brothers, even in their misfortunes and exile; and others were led to join them. And so it was that their banishment and sore trials tended the more to spread abroad the bond of unity, and to draw the members of the Church closer together: for the help and protection they afforded to one another, in this sad period—the sympathy and glowing affection which they felt and exercised toward their brethren—made them realise the blessings of Christian unity all the more sensibly. They felt,—

How blest the sacred tie that binds,
In union sweet, according minds!
How swift the heavenly race they run,
Whose hearts, whose faith, whose hopes are one.
To each the soul of each how dear!
What zealous love, what holy fear!
How doth the generous flame within
Refine from earth, and guard from sin!

(Anon.)

And it is a singular fact, which should not go unnoticed, as a solemn warning to others, that many of those who had embraced one or other of the heresies or schisms, that were so rife at one time, were eventually swallowed up in the great apostacy of Mahometanism. For it is stated that “In all those countries which Mahometanism permantly sub-

jugated, schism and heresy had struck deep roots and obtained many adherents. The separatists made common cause with the infidels, and rejoiced to see the Church oppressed; but they brought destruction upon themselves. All were involved in a common ruin; and those who had rejected the truth, as well as those who retained it, were delivered over to the tyranny and degradation of infidel dominion." "Such examples," says Palmer, "should further new arguments against voluntary separations from the Church of Christ; arguments addressed as much to those who love peace and order, and the welfare of their country, as to those who are fearful of incurring the displeasure of that God, who is not the author of turbulence and disorder, but of meekness, humbleness, brotherly love, and unity." It is a common saying, that "history often repeats itself." Therefore we should be warned against tampering with Truth, or making light of the bonds of unity. We read in the accounts of Mahomet, that he was assisted in writing the Koran by a learned Persian Jew, and two heretics, one a Nestorian, and the other a Monophysite. This he did in a cave, near Mecca; and pretended that he had received it at different times from heaven by the hands of the angel Gabriel. Thus it is, then, that those who have no solid basis of unity to hold by and rest upon, are tossed about by every wind of doctrine and cunning device of men, and that those who are creedless, are anchorless. They may wander for a time as "their own sweet

will" takes them, and boast of their "religious liberty," but there is danger in it, lest they drift upon some shoal, or be sucked in by some whirlpool that comes in their way, or in a tempest of opinions be dashed against a rock, and so make shipwreck of their Faith. For those who once depart from the truth, or reject the basis of unity, know not whither they may be led, or into what company they may fall, even to consort and join hands with secularists and unbelievers—the enemies of God and His Church.

Another thing to be noticed is, that during this period, when the lines of unity, both as regards the Faith and order to be observed in the Church, were more clearly laid down and accepted, a wave of missionary enterprise arose. As an eagle stireth up her nest, to make her young take wing, so the Lord, through suffering the inroad of heathen barbarians into Christian land, caused many leading spirits of the Church no longer to rest content at home with keeping the Christian religion to themselves, but led them to think of carrying the knowledge of a Saviour's love and salvation, not only to places of safety to which vast numbers fled, but of going with set purpose to the heathen who had settled down in various places after their conquest. Thus Ethiopia was converted by Frumentius, who was consecrated the first Bishop of the Ethiopians by St. Athanasius. The natives of Georgia, of Iberia, and the Goths of Thrace, Mœsia, and Dacia, also received the light of the Gospel. And St. Martin, Bishop of Tours,

completed the conversion of the Gauls. The natives of Sybanus, and of a portion of Arabia, were also converted to the religion of Christ.

The Apostolic labours of St. Patrick were rewarded by the conversion of the Irish nation to Christianity. The Gospel had indeed some adherents in that country, but Christianity now became general, and for the next four or five centuries, learning and religion shed a bright lustre on that remote island, when barbarism and ignorance prevailed over the rest of Europe. And many of its Saints became missionaries to these lands where the people were afterwards in large numbers brought over to the obedience of the Faith: so that Ireland began to be spoken of as "the Isle of the Saints." And be it noted that the Church of Ireland during these ages remained independent, and was not subject to Papal jurisdiction.

Clovis, King of the Franks, and founder of the French monarchy, received baptism with many of his people, from Remigius, Bishop of Rheims, A.D. 496. A little more than half a century after this, St. Columba, an Abbot of one of the Monasteries of St. Patrick, and of royal descent, crossed over to Scotland with twelve companions; he gained an influence over Conall, the King of the Dalriads, and converted Brud, King of the Northern Picts. He founded at Hy, in the Hebrides, the celebrated monastery of Iona, which became for many generations a famous seat of learning and religion; a school, as it were, of the prophets, or college for the education

and training of a body of Clergy, whose labours extended not only over Scotland, but far into the northern and mid-parts of Britain, and northward to the Orkneys, and the islands beyond,—perhaps even to Iceland. Singularly enough, St. Columba died the same year (597), or as some say, the year before that in which St. Augustine and his companions landed in the Isle of Thanet for the conversion of England.

Nor must we omit to mention the name of Columban, abbot of one the monasteries of Bencor in the Eastern part of Ireland, where in the houses and cells dependent upon it, a society of nearly three thousand monks dwelt together under holy rule. He, with twelve companions, likewise resolved to detach himself from earthly things, by leaving his country after the example of Abraham, and in 589 crossed into Britain and thence into Gaul. He intended to preach the Gospel to the heathen nations beyond the Frankish dominions, but the decayed state of religion offered him abundant employment in Gaul, and at the invitation of Guntrim, King of Burgundy, he settled in that country; where he laboured successfully for the conversion of the people. After twenty years he was banished by another king for the freedom he took in reproving him for his licentiousness. But coming to Metz, Theodabert II. gave him leave to preach in his dominions. He then ascended the Rhine to Switzerland, and laboured for a time in the neighbourhood of the Lake Zurich; thence on to the towns

near Lake Constance; in which places he gained many converts: then he retired to Italy, and eventually settled in a place near Naples, where he built a monastery, and where he died. (Stubbs, Collier, Robertson).

Then there is the Mission of St. Augustine to this country; who, with other pious brethren, was sent by Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, who commiserated the condition of the heathen invaders, and earnestly sought for their conversion. They met with a certain amount of success at first, and planted several Christian Churches; but the mission afterwards had many reverses, and the hearts of these preachers of the Gospel almost failed them, so that they were on the point of abandoning their work, and leaving the country altogether. A supposed miraculous intervention happened, which induced them still to hold on, but they never made great way with the Anglo-Saxons. The only two counties that they affected to convert were Kent and Essex: and the work must have been imperfectly done, for they soon relapsed into heathenism again, and needed another conversion. "The comparative failure," says Bishop Stubbs (Const. Hist. 217) "of the Kentish Mission after the death of Ethelbert, and the fact that each of the seven kingdoms owed its evangelisation to a different source, must have rendered the success of St. Gregory's scheme problematical from the very first."

Gregory's scheme was to include the whole of England, where there were to be two provinces, each

containing twelve Dioceses, with a Metropolitan at London and another at York. St. Augustine, at Gregory's suggestion, appears to have sought for the co-operation of the Bishops of the Ancient British Church, who had chiefly fled to the mountain fastnesses of Wales. His proud and domineering manner soon brought the hope of this much desired union of the Churches to nought, and was probably at the bottom of much of the want of his success in the ultimate conversion of England. The story of Augustine's way of receiving the Bishops, and his dictatorial manner of addressing them, is well known. He charged them with heresy, and with a want of adhering to the principles of unity; and informed them that they must reform on these points before he could suffer them to join him in the conversion of the English heathens. This was a bad beginning; there was nothing conciliatory. There was a long disputation, and, as Bede has it, they did not comply with either the entreaties, or the exhortations, or the rebukes of Augustine and his companions.

A Synod was then appointed, at which, it is asserted, seven Bishops of the ancient British Church attended, with many learned men. But before going to the Synod they consulted a certain devout and discreet man, who lived a hermit's life among them; who gave them wise counsel, and when they asked him whether they should forsake their own traditions at the entreaty of Augustine, he answered, "If he be a man of God, follow him." But again they asked,

“How shall we prove this?” “Do you contrive,” said the anchorite, “that he may first arrive with his company at the place where the Synod is held, and if at your approach he rise up to meet you, hear him submissively, being assured that he is a servant of Christ; but if he shall despise you, and not rise up at your coming, when you are more in number, let him also be despised by you.” From which we should all learn how important in our religious dealings with others it is, to mind that short admonition of St. Paul, “Be courteous.” For without it many a good cause is hindered, if not lost.

When they came Augustine did not rise to meet them: and this they took to be a sign of pride, which made them very indignant. For they said among themselves: “If he will not now rise up to meet us, how much more will he despise us as nothing worth, when we begin to be under his subjection?” He said unto them, “You act in many things contrary to our custom, or rather, to the custom of the universal Church, but yet, if you will comply with me in these three points, viz.: to keep Easter at the due time, to perfect the administration of Baptism (*i. e.*, by Confirmation, it is thought), and jointly with us to preach the Word of God to the nation of the Angles, we will readily tolerate all the other things you do, though contrary to our customs.” To this proposal they replied that “they would do none of these things, nor receive him as their Archbishop.” Dinoot, the learned Abbot of the once famous monastery of

Bangor-is-y-Coed—not Bangor on the Menai Straits, but a place close to the River Dee, near Chester—spoke last: “We are bound to serve the Church of God, and the Bishop of Rome, and every godly Christian, as far as helping them in offices of love and charity: this service we are ready to pay; but more than this I do not know to be due to him or any other. We have a Primate of our own, who is to oversee us under God, and to keep us in the way of spiritual life.” Then Augustine closed the Synod with something like a threat, saying,—“I foresee that if you will not have peace with Brethren you will have war with foes; and if you will not preach the way of life to the English, you will suffer deadly vengeance at their hands.” And thus they parted.

There are two lights in which this transaction may be viewed, which can only be noticed in passing. Some may be disposed to blame the British Bishops in not joining with the Roman Mission in seeking the conversion of the heathen English, and not peaceably complying with the reasonable demands of Augustine. But on the other hand, it must be remembered that it implied the surrender of their independence, which was their proper and canonical right, and their subserviency to the dictates of the Church of Rome, which Augustine had no right to demand. If this had not been demanded of them, there is little doubt but that they would have conformed to the two customs of Easter and Baptism most readily, as bringing them into closer agreement with the Church in other parts, and

would most willingly have joined in a united mission to the heathen in their own country. The record of what happened at this Synod is of some moment, then, to show that from the very beginning the Church of Rome had no authority to subject the Christians of this country to their rule. By the decrees of the General Council of Nice—confirmed by those that followed—the Church of Rome was transgressing the law of the universal Church, by attempting to assume jurisdiction over the Bishops of the ancient British Church. It was a sacred duty to come to their help in time of need, but not to rob them of their independence: this was wrong; and the British Bishops were not only clearly within their right, but, looking at the subsequent history of the Romish Church, wise in their generation, in resisting this coercive measure which Augustine would have forced upon them.

It is difficult at this distance of time fully to realise the terrible position of the ancient British Church. The monasteries in England for the training of men for the ministry had everywhere been destroyed; and later on the monastery at Bangor, in Wales, shared the same fate, when twelve hundred were slain. So that their hands were holden for a time. The British Church was, however, greatly resuscitated through the monastery which Columba had founded at Iona. Columba was not a Bishop, and could not ordain, but the British Bishops in the North did, and through their succession the greater part of England was eventually converted. There was then a possibility of

two successions of Bishops in the Church of England. This divided state of the English Church was happily soon averted, and unity between the different sections well established through the scheme of Theodore. This great and wise prelate, brought up in the East, was chosen to be Archbishop of Canterbury about a century after the coming of St. Augustine, and was really anxious for the welfare and unity of the English Church. His ability and influence were remarkable. Finding two different parties in the Church, his first step was to establish peace between them, and a uniformity of action and customs, so as to combine the Episcopate in one body, and arrange for their permanent and orderly co-operation. He then re-arranged the Dioceses, breaking up some of the larger ones—which had severally been of like extent with the seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy—and making additional new ones. Besides which, he endeavoured in other ways to promote the moral and religious welfare of the people, and looked well after the education and discipline of the clergy. In this, it is said, he was assisted by the Kings, without whose co-operation it could not have been attempted. But the result of this was, that “in a single century England became known to Christendom as a fountain of light, as a land of learned men, devout and unwearied missions, of strong, rich, and pious kings.” (Stubbs.)

While introducing these wise and important changes, bringing the two parties to act in harmony

together as one compact and orderly body, and laying the foundation of the National Church of England out of the old materials of the British and Roman mission, Theodore nevertheless resolutely maintained the independency of the Church of this country; so that, though his appointment was due to the Church of Rome—for by this time its Bishop was recognised as the guardian of the rights and liberties of the Churches in the West: not that he should usurp them, or overthrow them and appropriate them to himself and his successors—yet Theodore would not submit to having the internal affairs of the Church of England subject to the control of this foreign Church, or that it should be allowed to interfere in her own domestic arrangements; since this was contrary to the law of the universal Church. Theodore knew well his position, and that of the Church over which he had been made Primate, and he upheld it with courage. Sometimes he acted in rather a despotic and arbitrary manner, but he had ever the general good of the Church in view, and resolutely carried out his designs. When he made an inspection of the Northumbrian Church, he considered that the consecration of Ceadda or Chad, its Bishop, had not been properly performed; and not being satisfied with it, he deposed him, and appointed Wilfrid in his place. This was carrying matters with a high hand. St. Chad, as he was called, meekly submitted, for he was a very humble man, as well as devout and zealous: and he told Theodore that he

had always thought himself unworthy of such a position, and gladly resigned his charge. Theodore after a time also deposed Wilfrid, because, contrary to the Canon and law of England, he had appealed to Rome against the Primate. The Church of this country had a right to settle her own affairs, according to the Canons of the universal Church.

Fortunately we have an exact account given us by Bede of what took place at a Synod which the Archbishop called at Hereford, A.D. 673. It was the first time that the Church of England sat in Synod; for the distinction of British and Roman Communion was from this time to cease from among them. The records of it are, therefore, very valuable: and Theodore felt that they must be, for he ordered the proceedings to be carefully put down in writing, and it is this record of what was done that Bede gives us. After telling us that in the third year of Egfrid's reign Theodore assembled a Synod of Bishops and many other teachers of the Church, who loved and were acquainted with the Canonical statutes of the Fathers, he goes on to say that the Archbishop enjoined the observance of such things as were agreeable to the unity and peace of the Church; and then recounts the proceedings in the form in which it was drawn up:—

“In the name of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who reigns for ever and ever, and governs His Church, it was thought meet that we should assemble, according to the custom of the

venerable Canons, to treat about the necessary affairs of the Church." Then follow the time, place, and the names of many that attended; and proceeds:—"When we were all met together, and were sat down in order, I (Theodore) said: 'I beseech you, most dear brothers, for the love and fear of our Redeemer, that we may all treat in common for our faith, to the end that whatsoever has been decreed and defined by the holy and reverend Fathers, may be inviolably observed by all.' This and much more I spake tending to the preservation of the charity and unity of the Church; and when I had ended my introductory discourse, I asked every one of them in order whether they consented to observe the things that had been formerly canonically decreed by the Fathers? To which all our fellow priests answered: 'It pleases us very well, and we will all willingly observe with a cheerful mind whatever is laid down in the Canons of the holy Fathers.' I then produced to them the said Book of Canons, and publicly showed to them ten chapters in the same, which I had marked in several places, because I knew them to be of most importance to us, and entreated that they might be most particularly received by them all.

"CHAPTER I.—That we all in common keep the holy day of Easter on the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the first month.

"II.—That no Bishop intrude into the Diocese of another, but be satisfied with the government of the people committed to him.

“ III.—That it shall not be lawful for any Bishop in any manner to trouble monasteries dedicated to God, nor to take anything forcibly from their possessions.

“ IV.—That the monks themselves shall not remove from one place to another without the consent of their Abbot; * but continue in the obedience which they promised at the time of their conversion.

“ V.—That no Cleric, forsaking his own Bishop, shall wander about, or be anywhere entertained without letters of recommendation from his own Prelate. But if he shall once be received, and will not return when invited, both the receiver and the person received be under excommunication.

“ VI.—That Bishops and Clerics, when travelling, shall be content with the hospitality that is offered them: and that it be not lawful for them to exercise any priestly function without leave of the Bishop in whose Diocese they are.

“ VII.—That a Synod be assembled twice a year: (but so many difficulties presented themselves that this was overruled, and) it was approved by all that we should meet once a year on the first of August, at the place called Clofeshoch.

“ VIII.—That no Bishop, through ambition, should set himself before another; but that each shall observe the time and order of his consecration (consecrationis).

“ IX.—(There appears to have been a discussion on the matter): But it was generally set forth that

more Bishops should be made as the number of believers increased.

“X.—Of marriages; that nothing be allowed but lawful wedlock: that none commit incest; no man quit his true wife, unless as the Gospel teaches, on account of fornication. And if any man shall put away his wife, lawfully joined to him in matrimony, that he take no other, if he really wishes to be a Christian, but continue as he is, or else be reconciled to his own wife.

“These Chapters being thus treated of, and defined by all, to the end that, for the future, no scandal of contention might arise from any of us, and that there should be no mistake in their publication, it was thought fit that every one of us should, by subscribing his hand, confirm all the particulars so determined. Which definite judgment of ours, I dictated to be written by Titullus, our notary. Done in the month and indiction aforesaid. Whosoever, therefore, shall presume in any way to oppose or infringe this decision, confirmed by our consent, and by the subscription of our hands, according to the decrees of the Canons, let him know that he is excluded from all sacerdotal functions, and from our Society. May the Divine Grace preserve us in safety, living in the unity of His Holy Church.”

This was properly the foundation of the English Church, or rather the terms of unity on which it was consolidated. The basis of which were the ancient Canons of the Church, and arrangements in

accordance with them settled by the consent of all. And it is on this basis of Christian Unity the Church of England now acts. But what a contrast does the above document afford us between the conduct of Theodore and that of Augustine. "Both of them," says Dean Hook, in his *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, "had one object in view, to promote the unity of the Church of England: both had to confer with Bishops jealous of any encroachment upon their rights; but while Augustine thought of himself, Theodorus thought only of the cause: Augustine laid down the law, Theodorus invited discussion; and although, after the discussion on the seventh Chapter, and probably on the ninth, he was in a minority, he did not lose his temper, but, on a mere question of expediency, yielded with a good grace to others."

Seven years after the above named Synod, the Vith General Synod of the Church was held at Constantinople, A.D. 680. And as Bede says:—Theodore "desiring to preserve the Churches of the Angles, over which he presided, free from infection, an assembly of many venerable priests and doctors was convened (the same year), at which he diligently inquired into the doctrines of each, and found they all unanimously agreed in the Catholic Faith. This he took care to have committed to writing, by the authority of the Synod, as a memorial, and for the instruction of succeeding generations." The instrument begins as the other had done, "In the name of the

Lord:" &c.; and then continues: "Theodore, by the grace of God, Archbishop of the island of Britain, and of the city of Canterbury, being President, and the other venerable Bishops of the island of Britain sitting with him—the Holy Gospels being laid before them—at the place, which in the Saxon tongue is called Haethfelth (Hatfield), we conferred together, and expounded the true and orthodox faith, as our Lord Jesus in the flesh delivered the same to His disciples, who saw His bodily presence and heard His words, and as it is delivered in the Creed of the holy Fathers, and by all holy and universal Synods in general, and by consent of all approved Doctors of the Catholic Church. We, therefore, following them reverently and orthodoxly, and professing accordance to their divinely inspired doctrine, do believe, and do, according to the holy Fathers, firmly confess, properly and truly, the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, a Trinity consubstantial in Unity, and Unity in Trinity; *i.e.*, One God in three consubstantial Subsistences or Persons, of equal glory and honour."

After other words of the same import, it is then stated, "We have received the Five Holy and General Councils of the blessed Fathers acceptable to God: that is, of the 318 Bishops who were assembled at Nice, against the most impious Arius and his tenets: and that of Constantinople, of the 150, against the madness of Macedonius and Eudoxius, and their tenets; and that first at Ephesus, of 200, against the most wicked Nestorius and his tenets; and

that at Chalcedon, of 630, against Eutyches and Nestorius and their tenets; and again at Constantinople, in a 5th Council, in the reign of Justinian the younger, against Theodorus and Theodoret, and the Epistles of Ibas, and their tenets against Cyril." (Book IV. Ch. 17.) And to the above they all subscribed their names. They are very specific in their terms, that there might be no mistake. And from the above record, it may be noticed how the Church of England is in thorough accord and agreement with the Church throughout all the world; and that there was but one basis of unity for all Christians.

Before we pass away from this historical account of the early English Church, and the position and doctrines it held in conjunction with other Churches, there are two or three events that should be referred to. Theodore seems to have been much touched with the simple integrity and meek behaviour of Chad, he amended what he thought lacking in his former consecration, and upon a vacancy occurring in the See of Lichfield, he appointed him to be the Bishop. And seeing, says Bede, that it was the custom of that most reverend prelate to go about the work of the Gospel to several places rather on foot than on horseback, the Archbishop commanded him to ride whenever he had a long journey to undertake. And finding him still very unwilling to omit it, out of love to his former pious labour, Theodore, not to be outdone in humility, or as some amends for his past behaviour to Chad, himself, with his own

hands, lifted him on to the horse ; for he thought him a holy man, and therefore obliged him to ride wherever he had need to go. The Cathedral at Lichfield to this day is called after him.

Wilfrid also submitted himself and became reconciled to Theodore. For before this, after his wanderings and exile, his heart had become much softened ; for, as one observes, “ Afflictions mend the heart, and often quickens a zeal for the cause of God, when prosperity had gone near to quench it.” And not being allowed to return to any of the Christian kingdoms, he went to look after the poor Pagans of Sussex, who were the last people in England to become Christians. They were a fierce and barbarous people ; but at the time when he went to preach the Gospel to them, and win them to the kingdom of Christ, they had been overtaken with a terrible calamity. Little or no rain had fallen in the country for nearly three years before his arrival, whereupon a dreadful famine ensued, which cruelly destroyed the people. So great was it, that, as the report goes, forty or fifty men, being spent with want, would go together to some precipice, or to the sea-shore, and there, hand in hand, miserably perish by the fall, or be swallowed up by the waves. While thus in the depth of despair Wilfrid appeared among them, and spoke to them of the life to come ; and many of them received the good news of salvation through Christ Jesus, as if they were athirst for the water of life. And it so happened that on the very day in which the people as a kingdom received the

Baptism of faith, there fell a soft but plentiful rain ; the earth again revived, and the verdure being restored to the fields, the season was plentiful and fruitful.

This was taken as a token that God was making His face to shine upon them again, and confirmed them the more in the new life in Christ Jesus on which they had entered. Thus the former superstition being rejected, idolatry was renounced, and they believed with their whole hearts that He who had enriched them with both inward and outward blessings was the true God whom they would henceforth serve. Besides, when the Bishop came into the province, and found there such great misery by reason of the famine, he became a fisher with the poor, that he might be the better a fisher of men ; and taught them how to get food by fishing—for their sea and rivers abounded with fish, and yet the poor people had no skill to catch them ; and were content with a few eels that they got in ponds or the miller's dam. The Bishop ordered all the eel-nets to be gathered from all the neighbourhood round, had them joined together, and directed them how to cast them into the sea. This done, by the blessing of God, they immediately took three hundred fishes of several sorts, which being divided into three parts, one hundred were given to the poor, one hundred to those from whom they received the nets, and one hundred to the Bishop's men who had assisted them. By this, and other acts of kindness, the Bishop gained the affections of them all ; and they began more readily to attend to his preaching, in the hope of

obtaining heavenly goods, seeing that by his help they had received those that were temporal.

Another thing to be noticed in the history of the Early English Church at this time is the large revenues it soon possessed. As soon as the kings and their people realised the blessings of Christianity, and could rejoice in them, they gave freely of their substance, that the Church might be perpetuated and settled among them. Thus, when the people of Sussex were converted, the King of this part of the country gave to Wilfrid "land for eighty-seven families to maintain his company;" the place was called "Selaesen" (Selsey) or "the island of the sea calf," because it was encompassed with the sea on all sides, except on the west, where there is a narrow passage. Here Bishop Wilfrid built a monastery; and here also the first Cathedral for the Diocese of Chichester was built. And further contributions were afterwards voluntarily offered. In the other kingdoms where Christianity had been longer settled, their revenues were larger in proportion to the wealth of the people than they are now. Stubbs (*Const. Hist.* pp. 202, 203) speaking of this time, says: "Even the regularly endowed communities grew too rich, and, in the time of Bede, engrossed too large a share of the public land;" and goes on to say, "In their wealth they lost sight of the strict obligations of a religious life, so that, before the middle of the eighth century, a stringent reform was demanded, and the secular (the married Clergy and religious people) were synodically divided from the monastic clerks. But

with all these drawbacks, the monastic system did its work well, and that a most important work for the time. It colonised the country by means of missions, furnished the supply of teachers in districts too poor and too thinly peopled to provide for their own Clergy; and, in a manner, levelled and equalised the country for parochial administration." Some writers think that the parochial system was introduced into England by Archbishop Theodore, but later investigations lead us to doubt this, and that it must have been begun sometime afterwards. (See Lord Selborne, *Def. Ch.* p. 138.)

And the regular mission work and ministrations of the Church at this time led to the civilisation of the people, and the increase of learning. For Bede, speaking of Theodore, says: "He visited all the island wherever the tribes of the Angles inhabited, for he was most willingly entertained and heard by all persons; and being everywhere attended and assisted by Adrian, he disseminated the right rule of life. . . They gathered a crowd of disciples, and there daily flowed from them rivers of knowledge to water the hearts of their hearers; and, together with the books of Holy Writ, they also taught them the arts of poetry, astronomy, and ecclesiastical arithmetic. A memorial of which is, that there is still living at this day some of their scholars, who are as well versed in the Greek and Latin tongues as in their own in which they were born. Nor were there ever happier times since the Angles came into Britain; for their kings being very brave men, and very good Christians, they were a terror to all barbarous

nations, and the minds of all men were bent upon the joys of the heavenly Kingdom of which they had just heard; and all who desired to be instructed in sacred reading had masters at hand to teach them." (Book IV., Sec. 256.)

Another thing that all the Churches began to learn was Church music, which greatly attracted the people. But one of the most important results from the unity of the Christians in England, was the union of the several kingdoms to be one nation—one united people throughout the whole country. There was but one body of Christians all through the length and breadth of the land, they were united in one Church, on a definite basis, well understood; there was no other form of Christianity, no other body; Christians were happily one; and so it was that the preaching of the Gospel was accompanied with such a marvellous success in England at this time, as to be something like what it was in the primitive ages of the Church, and drew forth such generosity as almost to be accounted too lavish. The multitudes of them that believed, being thus of "one heart and one soul," were not slack, but gave of their substance most abundantly, so that there was no lack of means to further the ministrations of the Church—a further illustration of the value and advantage of the unity of Christians.

The revenues of the Church sometimes increased, and at other times decreased—increased through the gifts of her zealous members and new converts; decreased through the changes and chances of great

political events, the needs of the nation, and the ravages and sacrilege of kings and their ministers, who at times looked with a covetous eye upon the possessions of the Church, and by one means or another defrauded her of them. But what she did possess, still continued to belong to the Church from generation to generation. It was not given from one body to any other body of Christians, excepting for a short period during the Commonwealth, and then it was afterwards restored to the rightful owners, greatly diminished. What she did possess never belonged to the Church of Rome, though she abstracted at one time enormous sums from the Church of England, and sadly crippled her usefulness. Nor were the possessions of the Church in their original bestowment ever designed to be shared by those who broke away from the basis of unity which the Christians at the time so universally claved to. Nor can the modern notion, that other Christian bodies have a right to share in the possessions of the Church, because they profess a Christianity of their own, differing from the fundamental government of the Church, be ever established with any fairness and justice; much less that they can be diverted to secular purposes, without sanctioning robbery and injustice on a large scale, and dissolving the very bonds of English society, and the legal rights to all property which people possess.

Another blessed fruit of this unity among the Christians of England, besides this abundant liberality to the Church of this country, was the further develop-

ment of its missionary labours abroad. Another generation had not passed away before Wilbrord went forth from the celebrated Monastery of Ripon, with twelve other missionaries, to heathen lands, or lands invaded by heathen settlers, to preach to them the Gospel of salvation and the tidings of a Saviour's love. The scene of their labours was Friesland, where, after encountering many hardships and difficulties, they converted a large number of the people to Christianity; he baptized Pepin, who protected him, and succoured him, and established the famous Church of Utrecht, out of which many other Dioceses were afterwards formed. Though Wilbrord kept up a correspondence with the Church of England, he never returned to this country during the forty-six years of his missionary life, but after seeing the fruits of zeal in the service of Christ, in the countries on the lower course of the Rhine, where he planted many Churches, he died at a good old age, as Archbishop of Utrecht.

During this time, one of the English missionaries in Friesland—Swithbert—had been sent to England to be consecrated Bishop, to go on a mission with others into Prussia, where he met with good success; but was afterwards driven out by the old Saxon heathens, and eventually settled on the Rhine. Two other English priests, "for the love of a heavenly country," departed on a mission to Saxony, to convert the people, who were originally of the same race with those who had come and settled in England. They were very fearless, and counted not their lives dear unto themselves in doing

their Master's work. But before long the Pagans turned against them, and put them both to cruel deaths.

From the Monastery of Exeter, there went forth another celebrated Englishman named Winfrid; who, after visiting Wilbrord, became a missionary Bishop to the Germans eastward of the Rhine. He was afterwards better known by his name, Boniface. "Great numbers of missionaries came to join him from England, and numbers of the people of the provinces of the upper Rhine were converted and baptized. After a long and honourable course of missionary labours, having been appointed Archbishop of Mayence, he suffered martyrdom, with a number of his Clergy, in a tumult of the Pagans, A.D. 755." (Churton.)

Now these missions of the early English Church are brought forward to show, not only that she was in no wise behind other Churches in missionary zeal—and that if she was in some degree indebted to other Churches, other Churches were also greatly indebted to her without her claiming dominion over their faith—but that when the missionaries from this country, as well as from other Churches, planted new Churches in heathen countries, one and all had regard to the same basis of unity for all Christians, which had been initiated by the Apostles, and which was further more clearly defined by the first four or five General Councils of the Church. They all acknowledged and proclaimed the paramount authority of this basis in the various and distant countries where they made converts; binding

them together in one and the same body; so that they all held one and the same Faith; all were placed under one and the same kind of government; and all had one and the same Church constitution, and the same fundamental rules of order to go by. Hence, though separated by mountains and seas; though speaking divers languages, and being under the temporal rule of various Sovereigns, they all felt and realised that they were the members of one great spiritual family—the Church; and were all truly brethren in the Lord.

Before closing this chapter, attention should be drawn to this growing tendency to accept one basis of unity for all Christians, not only in the Church of England, but throughout Christendom. And this is shown in the gradual yet general acceptance about this time of what is commonly called *the Creed of St. Athanasius*. And this is the more remarkable, because it was at the first everywhere received as orthodox without the need of being expressly authorised by the Church. Who composed it is not known for certain, nor was the exact time when it was published known; nor had it any special name at the first. It certainly was not composed by St. Athanasius, for it guards us against heresies that arose after his days. Waterland ascribes it to Hilary, Bishop of Arles, in the early part of the fifth century: but many others consider it to be of later date. The title which it now has, was eventually given to it out of respect to St. Athanasius, who was the firm defender of the

Church against the Arian heresy, which the Creed specially teaches us to avoid.

If any of the heresies against which it guards us had been suffered to remain in the Church, it would have been the first step to overthrow the basis or foundation of its unity. The Church had continued as one body during the period of persecution, and had come off victorious; and during the period when heresies afterwards prevailed, she was, like a goodly vessel, steered by watchful and faithful mariners that manned her, guarding her from the rocks and shoals that came in her way, and bringing her safely out of these special dangers, sound in the faith, without any serious damage, for she was still whole and uninjured. The Church had condemned these errors severally as they arose, and sent notices to all branches of the Church, warning them of them, and bidding them avoid them: the which were so many signals to preserve Christians from making shipwreck of their faith. And the Athanasian Creed was a short formula drawn up in concise and accurate terms, teaching us of the right faith on the several points where many had gone wrong in times past, so as to guide us who came after them securely against them, when they came in our way. And the great value of this Creed is seen, in that the Church, since those days in which these heresies were rife, has been rarely touched by them, but kept steadily from them. And now for more than a thousand years the Churches of the East and the West have received it, and proclaim it with one unbroken

voice as a token of their unity in the Faith, and as their safeguard against dangerous errors into which they might be drawn. It is in no sense a new or another Faith different to the other Creeds, but a defence of the same truths, and it is, as this Creed was termed at the time of the Reformation, "The bulwark of the Apostles' Creed."

Men ignorant of the history of those early heresies, think it complicated and obscure, but did they know more of what had taken place, they would find its sentences full of terse and weighty truths concerning our Faith, which would prompt them to utter its words with ardour when repeated in the services of the Church. To simple minds the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds are sufficient, but to more intelligent minds capable of further instruction, it is of great worth—a very treasury of sound doctrine. But the chief ground of complaint against it is its warning, or as some call them its damnatory clauses. And yet, after all, the Church does but express in her own phraseology what she finds in Holy Scripture, and what her Lord and Founder has so solemnly declared. For nothing in this Creed is more denunciatory or dogmatic than words like these: "He that believeth not shall be damned;" or, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" or, "He that believeth not is condemned already:" all taken out of God's Word. The Church would not be faithful to her Lord and Saviour if she shrunk back from declaring this truth,

terribly awful as it is: she would be unworthy of her sacred trust as the guardian and expounder of Holy Writ, if she kept back part of the message she had to deliver, and did not warn unbelievers of the danger they are in.

Nature has her "warning clauses," bidding us be on our guard; since the fire will burn us, the water drown us, poisonous food, or foul air will endanger our lives. And it is not thought to be unwise or unkind to remind the young and too venturesome of the dangers they run. Why, then, should it be thought unwise or uncharitable in the Church cautioning people of the danger they run in not holding the right faith?

But because it is a time when many will not endure sound doctrine, and call upon their preachers to speak unto them smooth things, and keep from their ears anything of the truth that is awful or unpalatable, they join in a senseless cry against this Creed. Why, this is a reason only tenfold more weighty for keeping the glorious old Creed *where* it is, and *as* it is, in the services of our Church. Besides, it is one of the banners of our unity, around which the Church has rallied her forces: it defines more clearly the basis of a unity which was once generally accepted by Christians everywhere, and is at the same time, a testimony of its existence.

CHAPTER XI.

A DEPARTURE FROM THE BASIS OF UNITY.

IT will be remembered that for the first three hundred years of this era, the Christians had to pass through terrible seasons of persecution, but being compacted together in one body—the Church, they came forth from the conflict in an unbroken phalanx. There had been much suffering, hosts had won the crown of martyrdom; but the Church emerged forth from those fearful days in triumph, and with a large and growing increase of numbers. Multitudes, everywhere, still flocked to her standard, and enrolled themselves in her communion.

In the next period of another three hundred years, speaking in round numbers, as we have seen, the Church had been sorely tried by heresies and schisms, which greatly threatened to rend and tear her in pieces; but she contended faithfully against these various assaults, and still remained a united body of Christians—as the City of our God, that was at unity in itself. Though many were for a time shaken, and it seemed as if some dire heresy would gain the upper hand, as if the truth trembled in the balance, yet everywhere the Church recovered herself, even in those places where she had been most tried, and eventually stood firm and unshaken

upon the one basis of unity, which she had inherited; everywhere having one and the same Faith; all having one and the same Constitution to abide by; all cheerfully submitting to one and the same government, as that which had been divinely appointed.

And long might it have thus continued, and the same basis of unity been adhered to, if it had not been for one branch of the Church—and that a leading one, and from her worldly position having great influence—becoming ambitious, and seeking to dominate other Churches which were equally independent as herself: setting up her Bishop as supreme over all other Bishops, and attempting to subject them to his dominion, though they had by inheritance, and by the original Constitution of the Church, an equal authority with him in the government of it; and to whose voice and decisions, in Council assembled, he, as well as they, were equally subject, and must yield faithful obedience. This attempt, as it is well known, was made by the Church of Rome.

And within the next or *third* period of three hundred years, the Church of Rome and her Bishops had so far succeeded, as to establish a position of command for themselves, and by various devices, had gained great influence in and over many of the other Churches, notwithstanding a constant opposition and protest from those who still clung to the former order and Constitution of the Church, and strenuously endeavoured to maintain it, as the only basis of unity for all branches of the Church.

In the next period to this, or the *fourth* three centuries following, there was something like civil war in the Church; the Bishop of Rome using every kind of stratagem to get other Churches under his supreme control: through worldly policy, giving his support to sovereigns in their ambitious designs, providing they would subject the Churches of their country to his rule, not scrupling to use fraud and deceit, even putting forward forged documents in support of an authority which he had no lawful right to, which was neither divine as he pretended, nor had received the sanction of the Catholic Church, but with which, in an unlearned and dark age, he was able to deceive many. The resistance of this usurped dominion was everywhere very great; leading Churchmen knew that it had not been in the Church aforetime, and that by base and iniquitous measures they were little by little being deprived of their inalienable rights. The issue of this was perpetual discord and fighting, and the rending of the Catholic Church in twain, till by the end of this period, the Church of Rome had, to a large extent, gained the ascendancy.

In the following period, or the *fifth* three hundred years, the Church of Rome having gained her illegal position and power, trampled upon the rights and liberties of other Churches, engaging the temporal power to make war against those who would not submit to her domination, and enslaving them in a grievous and intolerable yoke of tyranny and bondage.

And then came the crisis of the Reformation, at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, when the Churches attempted to emancipate themselves from her thralldom, and regain their freedom; some successfully, and others not so. But even where they did not, a large body of Christians, though they did not want to leave the Church, and for some time continued in her, determined not to submit to the unlawful exactions of the Church of Rome. They could not accept her supremacy; they could not accept her altered constitution of the Church of Christ; they could not accept her new basis of unity—for Papal unity is widely and essentially different from Catholic unity, as we purpose to show. But above all, they could not accept the corruptions of Divine Truth, which the Church of Rome tried to impose upon them, and make them believe, without any warrant but their own, as necessary to salvation. Against this they stood immoveably resolute, and righteously so; even under many bloody persecutions which so frightfully disgraced the name of Christianity.

It was at this time that the Church of Rome forged new fetters to bind them, and force them to submission. Before the close of the Council of Trent, in 1570, a new set of doctrines, embodying the corruptions of the Faith, which the Church had for some time taught, were decreed and enacted, under the title of the Creed of Pius IV., wherein it was declared that, without believing in them, "no man can be saved." And each Bishop present, and

every Bishop afterwards, who held by the Roman Communion, was required to take an oath that he freely confessed and truly embraced these doctrines as part of the true Catholic Faith; and further declared, "I will be careful (by the help of God), that the same be retained, and firmly professed whole and inviolate: and that as much as in me lies, it be held, taught, and preached by those under my power, and by such as I shall have charge over in my profession. I—A.B.—Promise, vow, and swear the same, so help me God, and these His Holy Gospels." And what was the object and issue of this? Not only that no one should be allowed to preach or to minister in the Church, but such as would profess and teach these doctrines, but that those individual Christians who did not receive and openly profess these doctrines should be excluded from the holy Sacrament, and other ministrations of the Church: and, if they continued to reject them, should be excommunicated and turned out of the Church.

Just before the assembling of this Council the Society of Jesus, or the order of *Jesuits* was formed, and received the authoritative sanction of the Pope. Ostensibly their object was to bring souls to Jesus; but this must be done by bringing them to accept the Papal faith and conform to its rules. Their work was to be done chiefly covertly and by insidious means; and for this it was necessary always to have a peculiar class of men, specially trained, and sworn to secrecy. Though much has been written about

them, nothing more clearly reveals their manner of working than a little book of their own, called "*Secreta Monita Societatis Jesu*," or "*The Secret Instructions of the Jesuits*." And among other things they are told "how they must deport themselves so as to gain and preserve a familiarity with princes, noblemen, and persons of the greatest distinction:" "How to behave towards those at the helm of affairs." "The chief things they are to recommend to preachers and confessors of nobles." "The methods of inducing rich widows to be liberal to the Society." "How they are to be secured, and how their effects are to be disposed of." Such are some of the heads of the Chapters. They insinuated themselves into places, families, and societies under some disguise—and even to this day they carry on the same policy—to spy out secrets so as to advance their own cause, or to find out the real sentiments and purposes of influential persons, and either to thwart their designs, or, as formerly, to denounce them to the Inquisition, where it existed. Such, then, was another formidable machination for furthering the Papal System, and obstructing the Reformation as far as possible.

It is a singular coincidence that just three hundred more years—making a sixth three hundred—after the defining and declaring the new dogmas of the Creed of Pius IV., the Vatican Council which assembled in 1870, should proclaim and promulgate the Infallibility of the Pope as an article of faith. A few years before, in contradiction to Holy Scripture, the doctrine

of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary had been publicly declared and promulgated by the Pope himself. But the Infallibility of the Pope was to carry with it a power to declare any further dogma or doctrine that he might think fit to define; to establish any new Canon, and give to his decision on any matter the force of law everywhere in the Church; without in future having the consent of the Church in Council. The Church in Council was henceforth to be his instrument in carrying out his will; it was not to have a will of its own, however the assembled Bishops or any number of them might think otherwise: their duty was now simply to obey the Pope. Henceforth the whole direction and ordering of the Church was to be in the hands of the Pope. Arrangements were made that every Clergyman in the Roman Communion should be removable at the will of his Bishop; and every Bishop made dependent on the will of the Pope. So that the whole machinery of the Papal Church is henceforth to be under his direction: and it must be added, under the direction of those who surround him: for the chief authority is really in their hands; he is not to act without their counsel; he is therefore guided by them, and thus, much depends upon the character of those who compose his *Curia*.

There is more to be said both about the Council of Trent and the Vatican Council, as to their composition and how affairs were managed, so that the Bishops assembled might be brought over to decree what the

Pope and his party had determined upon beforehand. But what I want to point out is this, that from the time of the authoritative promulgation of the decrees of the Council of Trent, the Church of Rome and her adherent Churches ceased to be Catholic and became Papal. They still call themselves Catholic, and even claim to be the only Catholic Church in the world; but this does not make them so; they must prove themselves to be so; and this they cannot do, for they have virtually become an heretical Church. And though out of courtesy, because of their vast following, they are called *the* Catholic Church, yet how can they in reality have a right to this title when they have set aside the Catholic basis of Unity.

Catholicity, as it is well known to those who study the ancient history of the Church, consisted chiefly in each branch retaining its independency, and in the agreement and decisions of all her Bishops, or the majority of them, relative to what is the Faith, Constitution, and order of the Church, as it had been received from the beginning; and not in subjecting the whole to the will and dictates of one man. In doing this, the Papal Church, from the very nature of the case, ceased to be truly Catholic; there being no longer a free, wide, universal, or Catholic agreement, but instead thereof an enforced agreement to the views and decisions of one individual; which is the reverse of what is Catholic.

It is not enough that the Church of Rome should have a true succession of Bishops from the Apostles,

nor that it should be a succession from St. Peter ; for there were other Apostles also from whom a succession of Bishops proceeded, as that of St. John and St. Paul. Indeed, the latter was associated with St. Peter in the consecration of the first Bishop of Rome, if we are to credit what Eusebius and other writers say, showing that authority came from the Apostles as a body, and not from St. Peter personally. To be truly Catholic, besides the lawful succession, the Bishops of Rome must maintain the Catholic Faith inviolate and without corruption, as the Church of Christ did for more than six hundred years. To be truly Catholic, it is necessary also that they adhere to the Catholic customs and Canons accepted and practised at this period by the Church universally, including also the Church of Rome, as the words of Gregory the Great towards the end of this period do testify. The term Catholic, as most people know, signifies *universal*, and because these doctrines were generally accepted by the Bishops of all the Churches as true, it came to signify what was pure, orthodox, and Apostolical ; and so the Customs and Canons also, because then received and acted upon by the Church generally as the basis of unity for all, and as most agreeable to Apostolical order were regarded as Catholic. But how can the Church of Rome be Catholic in truth, when she has altered the Faith as delivered to the Churches by the Apostles, by adding strange doctrines to it incompatible with their teaching ? How can this Church be called truly Catholic when she so flagrantly violates some of the

fundamental Canons of the ancient Catholic Church, regarded as Apostolical? If the Church of Rome is Papal she cannot be really Catholic. In her Bishop claiming to be *Supreme and Infallible*, and refusing communion with all other Churches except on these terms, she shows that she has departed from the Catholic system, as received from the beginning, and as declared by her in the first Five, or even Six, General Councils of the Church. Consider the matter honestly, and judge for yourselves.

The facts of history should teach us how to regard these matters aright, and the great danger there is in a departure from the basis of unity in any of the ways indicated. We take up, therefore, the narrative of events in the Church where we left off. Towards the close of the first six centuries of the Christian religion, and while the Church might still be counted as one, call to mind what happened at the Fifth General Council, A.D. 553—the last before the Church of Rome set up a claim to the Papacy at the beginning of the seventh century—how Vigilius, the Bishop of Rome, was accused of upholding those who propagated the Monophysite heresy, how vacillating his conduct was, and how he was finally condemned by the Fathers of the Council, deposed from his Bishopric, and his name ordered to be erased from the diptychs. And yet it must be remembered that Gregory the Great, knowing all this, afterwards, when made Bishop of Rome, approved of this Council and venerated it, as well as the four previous Councils, as

having an authority almost equal to that of the four Gospels.

Now what do we clearly learn from this? (1) That the government of the Church was firmly in the hands of the Episcopate, lawfully assembled in Council; that all appeals on vexed questions must finally be settled by them; that when they were free and unconstrained, and could act independently and without having undue or improper influence brought to bear upon them, their decrees were of the greatest weight and value: and received as the lawful authority of the Church, so that even the Emperor submitted, though at one time he was disposed to favour Vigilus. Here the judgment of the Church was honestly given by the Bishops coming from various parts; and, agreeing in their views, an end was put to the controversy; and the heresy resolutely suppressed in the Church.

(2) Then we learn, that at the time of holding this Fifth General Council, the Papal supremacy of Rome did not exist, nor ever had existed from the beginning of the Christian religion; much less was there any belief in the Infallibility of the Bishops of Rome among these Catholic Bishops. Indeed, circumstances but too plainly proved that he was just as fallible as other Bishops; nor was it considered that he had any special grace given to him, more than the rest, to keep him from falling into error.

(3) Moreover, we clearly see how dangerous it must be to the integrity and purity of the Faith, as well as to the fundamental Canons for preserving order

and unity in the Church generally, to have such a system as the Papacy to depend upon. And afterwards have fully proved this. This became very evident to the Catholic Bishops of that time, but to none more so than to Gregory the Great, when the See of Constantinople first claimed the Papacy; for he expressly said: “Neither can we comply with this *innovation, without betraying religion, and adulterating the Faith of the Catholic Church.*” And, that if all judgment depended upon “any one Bishop” who “should happen to miscarry,” “the whole Church would sink with him.” For example, if the Papal supremacy of Rome had actually existed, there seems every probability that the Monophysite heresy would have been forcibly foisted upon the Church, as many other heresies have been since through the power of the Papacy. And so also would it be equally dangerous to entrust the government and constitution of the Church to one man; his advisers and favourites would not be immaculate, and would want to control the earthly head, to advance their own interests and that of their friends; hence it would become a system specially open to bribery and corruption, abuse and tyranny, as events afterwards proved it to be. But what should prove a ban to it for ever was, that it had never been accepted in the Church downwards from the Apostles, and had no lawful authority to support it, but was strenuously opposed by the whole Catholic Church, which would not submit to be dictated to by any one man, when it was their place, as a united Episcopacy,

to govern all according to the Canons that had been ordained in these first Catholic or Œcumenical Councils. Gregory the Great was deeply sensible of the importance of maintaining the Catholic system in all its integrity, and therefore *protested* with all his might, and in the strongest terms he possibly could use, against the Papal system in setting up a universal Bishop over all, which he compares to that of Satan, who aspired to be higher than all angels. "Am I defending my own cause?" he asked; "Is this any special injury to the Bishop of Rome? It is the cause of God, the cause of the whole Church. Let all Christian hearts reject the *blasphemous* name." (Ep. ad Maur: Aug. IV. 32.) And, writing to John of Constantinople, he says: "No one in the Church has yet *sacrilegiously* dared to usurp the name of Universal Bishop. Whosoever calls himself Universal Bishop is Antichrist." (Ep. IV. 38.)

And so strongly did this feeling prevail in the Church throughout the world, that for some time afterwards the Roman Papal system, as it now is, could hardly be said to exist; it did not at the first so much show itself outwardly in putting its principles into practice. Rome, however, had stretched forth its hand to take of the forbidden fruit: within twelve years of the death of Gregory, its Bishop had usurped the title of Universal Bishop, and would not give it up: or rather, the principle and system of Popery had got possession of the Church of Rome, taken root, and was not to be eradicated. It lay buried for a time, like the seed of some pernicious

plant, and only began to show itself gradually at first; or like the incubation of some malignant disease which does not disclose itself for a period, but afterwards develops itself, and breaks out with all its virulency.

And the issue of this was, that when the Papal system of the Roman Church began to develop itself and appear in active operation, it fairly broke up the unity of Christendom into two opposing camps, the combatants of which were at constant war with each other: not content with bitter animosities, they proceeded to bloodshed, and frequently fighting for the ascendancy, involving great masses of the people, who were compelled to join one or other side. And it was in this contest for the supremacy that, as Gibbon says, "the Roman Bishops" "deluged Europe and Asia with blood." And then for a period the Papacy gained the ascendancy; and seemed to dominate all Churches, until it forced its novel doctrines, its arbitrary and hard rule, and superstitious practices upon all; many of whom, feeling them to be opposed to the Gospel, were alienated from the Church, or if they conformed outwardly, cherished and held a kind of social Christianity among themselves, independently of, or over and above the Church as thus subjected to the Roman Papal system. So that thereby a large body of some of the best of Christians—men of sincere piety, who might be regarded as the salt of the earth, in preserving it from moral depravity and ignorance of the truth as it is in Jesus, were compelled from con-

scientific motives to separate from the Church, as it was then governed.

That a strenuous opposition against the very existence of Popery in the Church—even in its first efforts—was made by the great body of the Catholics, and was continued for long after Gregory's death, is plainly evident from what passed in the *Sixth* General Council held at Constantinople, A.D. 680: that is, more than sixty years after the Church of Rome claimed possession of the Papacy. For it confirmed the Canon of the Second General Council, as the Fifth General Council had done before, granting "*the like privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome*" (Constantinople) "as had been done to the throne of Old Rome, because that city obtained the Empire," "judging rightly" that the See of Constantinople "should also be magnified in ecclesiastical affairs *as highly as she:*" the Sixth Council adding these emphatic words: "Renewing the determination of the hundred and fifty holy Fathers, assembled in this divinely preserved and royal city, and the six hundred and thirty gathered together in Chalcedon, we determine also that the throne of Constantinople *receive equal privileges with the throne of Old Rome*, and be magnified and accounted in ecclesiastical affairs as high as it, being the second after it; after which is the throne of Alexandria; and after it that of Jerusalem." So that the Bishop of Constantinople is *still* of equal power and authority with the Bishop of Rome: and neither one nor the other could claim

supreme jurisdiction, nor could Rome be accounted the head of the Church, any more than the Patriarch of Constantinople.

And moreover, though Constantinople was accounted as the chief Bishop in the Eastern Church, as Rome was in the Western Church, their several powers in both these divisions of Christendom fell far short of what is usually thought to be comprehended under the term "supremacy." Their powers were then limited by the Canons of the early Councils, which still remained in force, and preserved to each Patriarchate and Diocese in both these Divisions their independence, and forbid any superior Bishop to interfere or intrude into the Patriarchate or Diocese of another, unless there was some imperative call for it, as some irregularity, or violation of the Faith, or of the Constitution of the Church, in the defence of which all were concerned, and more especially those Churches near at hand. The rule then was very much like what the Archbishop of Canterbury exercises at the present time; though Primate of all England, he is restricted from interfering in the Province of York, or even in any of the Dioceses of his own Province, if there be no lawful necessity for it. And the reason of this is, that the Church of England is guided in what it does, as its rule of action, by those early Councils of the Church, just as Gregory the Great professed to be, and esteems their decisions as the basis of unity for all Christian people, as he evidently did.

But there was another transaction or decision in this Sixth General Council that went much against the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, and against his future claim to Infallibility. For in this Council, Honorius by name, Bishop of Rome, was condemned as a heretic. For in its recorded Acts, it is expressly said: "But with these, viz., Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paulus, Petrus, Bishops of Constantinople, Cyrus of Alexandria, Theodore of Pharan, with these we saw that Honorius, who was Bishop of Old Rome, be cast out of the Catholic Church, and anathematized, because we find by writings from him to Sergius, that in all things he followed his judgment and confirmed his wicked opinions." (See Concil. Trul. Act 13, Vol. III. p. 1334.) And in the first Canon of the said Council it is said that it condemned "such as disturbed and adulterated the right doctrine of Faith, and teach the people one will and operation in our Lord Jesus Christ; we mean Theodorus the Bishop of Pharan, Cyrus Bishop of Alexandria, *Honorius the Bishop of Rome*, Sergius, Phyrrus, Paulus, Petrus, Bishops of this city." (p. 1657.)

The arguments, though in the same direction, as before now become stronger: for from this it is clear (1) that the Bishop of Rome was again—more than a hundred and twenty years after the former Council—not considered by the Catholic Church to be infallible in his judgment respecting the "unspotted Faith:" and by consequence no successor in that throne could be—no future Bishop of Rome, whatever privileges of

St. Peter he may claim. For here we see Honorius, Bishop of that See, is condemned for Monothelicism ; as Eleutherius, Liberius, Anastasius II., John XXII., and many other Bishops of Rome were, who were severally tainted with other heresies. Their decisions, therefore, respecting the Faith or Rule of the Church, are not to be trusted any more than any other Bishops, unless they can be shown to be in accordance with Holy Scripture and the Canons of the ancient Catholic Church. (2.) We see also that the Bishop of Rome is not accounted the head of the Church in any sense, and that he was not supreme in authority ; for if he had been, certainly so many learned and pious men, holding positions of authority and trust in the Church, would not have dared to pass such a sentence upon him. But we see that they make no more of him than they did of the other heretics, even condemning him for joining with them. (Beveridge.) (3.) We further see that the supreme power for the government of the Church, for maintaining the Faith, and preserving the unity of Christians, *was still* in the hands of the Bishops in their collective capacity, as our Saviour from the first had designed it to be ; and as it had been handed down from the Apostles, who were undoubtedly the first Bishops of the Church. But with the Apostles, even, the supreme power was not lodged in the hands of one, but in the hands of all ; so that each single Apostle was obedient and subject to the rule of all.

That the Bishop of Rome had not so much authority in the ancient Catholic Church as he now pretends to have, is clearly seen also in that appeals were *not* to be made to him. This was in accordance with the fundamental rule as received and determined on by the first four General Councils, and was evidently acted upon by other large branches of the Church Catholic, as is evident from what is expressly decreed in other Councils, as, for instance, in the Council of Antioch:—"That if any Bishop being accused of certain faults, be judged by all the Bishops of the Province, and all unanimously pass the same sentence upon him; let him not be judged any more by others, but let the unanimous sentence of the Bishops of the Province remain firm." And in the second Council of Milevi, where representatives of the African Church were assembled, it was thus ordered: "It pleaseth us also that Bishops and Deacons, and other inferior clergymen, in any cause which they shall have, if they complain of the judgments of their own Bishops, let the neighbour Bishops hear them. But if they think also that appeal should be made from them, let them not appeal, but only to the African Councils, or to the Primates of their Provinces. But whosoever shall think that appeals should be made to any foreign power, or beyond the seas, let them not be received by any into communion within Africa." It was on this ground that Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, would not for a long while receive Wilfrid of York back into the communion of

the Anglo-Saxon Church, after appealing to Rome, and wherefore he was imprisoned by his sovereign.

And this is but that which had been determined upon also in the Great Council of Nice; which was grounded upon the Apostolical Canons; showing the continuity of rule in the Ancient Catholic Church from Apostolic times. For the fifth Canon of Nice is:—"Concerning those that are excommunicated, either of the Clergy or Laity, by the Bishops of every Province, let this rule be observed, according to the Canon that pronounceth that they that are excommunicated by some Bishops *do not go to others*. But let it be examined whether it be from hatred, contention, or any other fault of the Bishop that they are excommunicated: for the better examination of which, it seemeth well that in each Province twice a year Councils meet; that all Bishops of the Province meeting together, such questions may be examined; and so they that have evidently offended their Bishop, may seem to all justly excommunicated, until it seem good to the Bishops to pass a milder sentence upon them." Where we may notice, as Bishop Beveridge says (1), that they that are excommunicated by the Bishops of any other Province whatsoever, and by consequence, not by the Bishop of Rome; (2), that all questions should be determined in the Province where they arise; (3), that such persons as are excommunicated be so accounted by all, till the Bishops themselves, by whom they are excommunicated, receive them into the Church again,

no respect at all being had in this particular to the Bishop of Rome more than to other Bishops.

And it is of much importance to notice these Canons and remarks, because it was chiefly through *the appeals* made to the Bishop of Rome, that he gained power and authority to interfere in Provinces and other Churches that did not belong to him, and subjected them to his domination; whereby the Bishops lost their independency, and were compelled to obey the mandates of the Pope, not only in the management of their own Dioceses, but in furthering superstition and erroneous teaching: unless they chose to run the risk of resisting this usurpation of authority, the tyranny he exercised, and the demands he exacted; which he made to be a thing to be dreaded; and was not often ventured upon in later days. So that the whole of the Episcopate, wherever his authority extended, were placed in a terrible position. If they maintained their rights, and did what their consciences bid them, they incurred the Pope's displeasure, which they were soon made to feel: and if they obeyed his will, they had to act against their own consciences and sense of what was right.

But it was a long time after that the Bishops of Rome severally claimed to be "the Universal Bishop," or head over all the Church, that they were able to assert their supremacy and domination. Another event in the history of the early Papacy will elucidate this as well as of the precarious nature of

the religion it enforced, and how little it is to be trusted by Christians. About one hundred and eighty years after assuming this title and position, what was falsely called the Seventh General Council was convened, rather better than a hundred years after the Sixth; and had it not been that many of the Churches—particularly in the West, over which the Sixth Council had given the Bishop of Rome a certain degree of oversight—still retained their independency, the greater part of the Church Catholic would have fallen into idolatry, chiefly through the instrumentality of the Pope; which at once, and so vividly shows the great danger the whole Church is in by being made subject to one man, or one Church; which was the great peril which Gregory the Great so much dreaded in setting up “a Universal Bishop,” to whom all must yield obedience. Let us briefly review a few of the particulars.

Instead of the fervour and purity of worship exhibited among the Primitive Christians, we see credulity, superstition, and idolatry creeping into the Church. The use of images had for some time been allowed, not to worship, but to remind people of those whom they were to represent, and of what they had done; but not content with this, some few began to worship them and pray to them. And seeing this was on the increase, a Council was called at Constantinople to suppress them; when the worship of them was forbidden; but the indignation against these images being used for idolatrous purposes being so great, in their

abhorrence of them some broke the images in pieces and destroyed them. This roused a feeling of opposition among a number of those who had become accustomed to them, and great resentment was raised against those whom they called *Iconoclasts*—*i.e.*, destroyers of images. This Council was held A.D. 754. But after it a strong party sprung up in favour of them; strong, because Irene, the mother of the young Emperor, then but a child, led the faction; and when a few years afterwards a new Patriarch had to be elected for Constantinople, she cast about to see whom she could, through the influence of the court, get promoted to this important post. There were none of the Bishops of the Province that could be trusted, nor yet any of the leading Clergy; therefore it was brought about that a Secretary of State, a very able man, in favour of images, though a layman, should be elected to the high office. Some foreign Bishops were found to consecrate him; but it was altogether an irregular transaction.

Shortly afterwards both he and Irene set to work to have another General Council held to confirm the use of images; and to this end they jointly wrote a letter to the Pope of Rome, inviting him to take the lead in this matter, for they knew him to be in favour of the measure. It was first called at Constantinople, but the uproar was so great in the city, that the Bishops, chiefly from the East, in favour of the measure could not proceed with the business; some of the Imperial soldiers and leading citizens broke into the

place where they were sitting, and, without offering them violence, made them desist. At last the Emperor's mother sent word to the Council that they had better for the present give way. When this became known, and the Council began to break up, a great shout of victory was raised, led by the Iconoclast Bishops and Clergy. And, after this, all seemed to quiet down. But the matter was not allowed to rest.

In the year following (A.D. 787) the Council re-assembled at Nicæa, the place where the first General Council had been held, both because they would be safer from disturbance, and the name of the place might give the greater weight to their decisions. The Council consisted of 350 Bishops, chiefly Orientals, for few of the Western Churches would take part in it, save the Pope of Rome and his adherents. His legates had the first place of dignity assigned to them, though the new Patriarch of Constantinople took the lead in the management of the Council. For the Pope of Rome, in his reply to the letter that had been sent to him, had alluded to the irregular appointment of the Patriarch of Constantinople, but had stated that he would overlook the twofold blot of his election: he would at least do this, if the Patriarch would engage to do three things: (1) Get the pseudo-synod against images condemned; (2) Seek union with the Roman See to that extent as to make profession of his devotion to it as head of all the Churches of God; (3) Get the images restored by an Imperial edict to their accustomed

places in all the churches in the Capital, and throughout the East, conformably with the traditions of the Roman Church. We cannot find how far the Patriarch of Constantinople fell in with the stipulation of the Pope to own him as "the universal Bishop," or whether he did this at all. But it is clear that in this Council the judgment of the former Council at Constantinople against images was condemned, and the worship of them established. That we may view the matter fairly, even when our feelings are opposed to what was done, portions of the decree are here given:—"We define . . . that like the image of the precious and life-giving Cross, the venerable and holy images be set up . . . for according as they are continually seen by image representation, so they who behold them are excited to remember and to love the prototypes, and to pay these images salutation and respectful honour; not indeed that true worship which is according to our faith, which only befits the divine nature . . . but to offer incense and lights to their honour, as has been piously ordained by the ancients . . . forasmuch as the honour paid to the image passeth on to the original, and he who adareth an image doth in it adore the person of him whom it doth represent." And that there might be no mistake about the matter, the legates of the Pope suggested that an image should be brought in and receive the adoration of the assembly, which was accordingly done.

It will be observed that a difference is made between the worship paid to them, and the Divine

Being. But what right or authority had they to sanction and decree the worship of images at all? The Divine command is clear enough: "Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." And to do this, even in a less degree than the worship paid to God, is simply *idolatry*. Besides, though a distinction is made in the decree, how are the unlearned to perceive and understand the difference? It is impossible almost but that their minds will rest upon the material object before them, when they kneel down before it, pray to it, and offer incense and lights; so that the very heathen, upon seeing this, might exclaim, "Why, you bow down to and worship stocks of wood and stone, and images of your gods; why should you condemn us? there may be a little, but not much difference between us."

When Pope Hadrian received the acts of this Synod of Nice, he transmitted them into France to Charlemagne, to be confirmed by the Bishops of his kingdom; but these prelates assembled together, composed a reply, in which they absolutely condemned any adoration or worship of images. They said, "We object to nothing about images but their *adoration*; for we allow the images of the Saints in the Churches, not to *adore* them, but for historical remembrance, and ornament to the wall." They acknowledged that this Synod of Nice did not wish Divine worship to be paid to images, but they distinctly rejected *every act and kind of worship* rendered to them. They further

prohibited "service," "adoration," "honour exhibited by bending the neck, or bowing the head," "the oblation of incense and lights." In fact, as the learned Benedictine, Mabillon, allows, "The Gallican Bishops admitted no worship whatever, whether positive or relative, to be given to images:" and one of their reasons for this was, that it was practically impossible that the honour paid to the image should pass to, or be paid to the original.

The Pope forwarded a reply, in which he maintained the decision of the Nicene Council, but for all this the opinion of the Gallican Bishops remained unchanged. Charlemagne had transmitted a copy of the acts to the Bishops of England in 792, requesting their judgment on them. These prelates, abhorring the worship of images, authorised Albinus to send a refutation of the Synod of Nice, in their name to Charlemagne. Two years after this, at the request of Charlemagne, the Bishops of the West, to the number of three hundred, from Gaul, Aquitain, Germany, and Italy assembled at Frankfort, and there formally and synodically annulled and rejected the Council of Nice, declaring that it was *not* to be acknowledged as *the Seventh General Council*.

It is a matter of certainty, then, that as regards the Churches in the West (with the exception of the Roman See), the adoration of images was generally condemned, and this Second Synod of Nice rejected as illegitimate. Moreover, it was not universally acknowledged in the Eastern Churches. For though for a time its

decrees were enforced by the strong arm of the law through the aid of the Empress Irene, the party who rejected the use of Images still continued to protest and resist the efforts made to re-instate them: and in 815 another Council was called at Constantinople to confirm the Council held at this place in 754 which suppressed them: and anathematised that of Nice which favoured their use. (Robertson's Hist.; Palmer on the Church; Smith's Dic. Chr. Antiq.)

It is clear, then, that though the Pope of Rome had for two hundred years claimed to be "the Universal Bishop," and was acknowledged by the Sixth General Council to be in a certain sense the Chief Bishop of the Western Churches, his authority was not supreme, even over them, but very far from it: for they still retained their independency; so much so that they refused to follow the lead of the Pope on this very momentous question; and condemned in the plainest terms the worship of images, which he desired to be received and practised everywhere in the Church. And the singular feature of this is, that the Pope did not at all resent the independent action of the Bishops of the other Churches, or threaten to break off communion with them, or even reproach them for resisting his idolatrous measure: which is a significant proof that he knew that they were acting within their right; and that he did not then exercise any supremacy over them, to coerce them against their will and consciences.

But who cannot see that if he had been supreme, and the Catholic Church as a body had been really

subject to him, they must have yielded obedience to him, and have been landed in idolatry. And this danger extended to other things ! It is well known that the Church of Rome tried afterwards to impose upon the Catholic Church many objectionable practices and corrupt doctrines which were not Catholic, inasmuch as they had not then, or in the ancient Church, been universally received and approved of, as all true Catholic doctrines and customs were : they were novel, and put forth solely on the authority of one branch of the Church, which attempted to impose its views upon the others, which was in itself an uncatholic measure, carrying little weight with it ; so that these dictates of the Pope were consequently frequently condemned and resisted. Hence arose terrible confusion, dissension, and divisions. Instead of being content with the ancient Catholic basis of Christian unity, the Popes tried to set up another, which was to make themselves and their own individual Church the centre and the source of unity in the Church ; and thus reverse the very character of the unity which had come down from the Apostles.

There was comparative safety, and a guarantee for orthodoxy—for the purity of the Faith and the preservation of the Constitution, Government, and Order of the Church according to Apostolic rule, in the original Catholic system, to what there is in the Papal system, which is radically different. Just as there is much greater dependence upon a cone standing upon its wide base, to what there is when it is propped up on its

apex, and has to bear the whole weight on one part only: so under the Catholic system or rule, when nothing can be enjoined—no new doctrine or phase of doctrine as necessary to salvation but what is *by General Consent* allowed to be in agreement with the Scriptures; and no New Canon for universal acceptance shall be imposed upon the Church—no great change in the Constitution or uniform Customs altered—but *by General Consent*, freely and fairly obtained, there is much greater certainty and security for what is right and true, resting on this broad, solid, well tried basis, than on the Papal system whereby you have to depend upon and trust in one man, or one Church, for your religion, which is so subject to change and corruption, that some things may be introduced wholly at variance with the Catholic faith and rule, and so turned about that one Pope may alter and even condemn and set aside what his predecessor has affirmed or decreed; as past history testifies to be the case. Hence, though there is a unity in the Papacy which its adherents labour for, it is an enforced subject to the Church of Rome, and a wholly different thing from Catholic unity; which is founded on the common agreement of all, honestly obtained—an agreement, too, in accordance with the Canons of the Primitive Church, and what the Catholic Fathers settled in the first General Councils.

It is most astounding, that having assumed the position of “Universal Bishop,” the Popes should not

have endeavoured and laboured to have preserved the Catholic Faith and the Apostolic Order. But a strange fatality seemed to attend their career, since the Church of Rome seems to have become such a receptacle for errors; and to have taken up so many fond things vainly invented, and introduced so many false doctrines, which the ancient Catholic Church had never sanctioned; and tried to force them upon the various Churches of Christendom.

And though long objected to, and vigorously opposed, the time however came, when the Pope gained more power, and could then enforce obedience to his dictates; and not only compel the other Churches to fall in with the corrupt ways and views of the Church of Rome, but could interfere with all their internal arrangements and appointments and exact tribute from them; till it became a tyranny too grievous to bear. It is too long and tortuous a period of history to enter upon in this enquiry, as to how the Pope gained this dominion and coercive power over other Churches; and not only over them, but over many of the Sovereigns of Europe. The fact itself is well known, and may here suffice. But what should be particularly noticed is this, that the departure from the ancient Catholic and Scriptural basis of unity by the Church of Rome, and the attempt—the unscrupulous and audacious attempt—to substitute a Papal unity, or the agreement with one man, or one branch of the Church, and implicit subjection to him or it, was the breaking up of the unity of

Christendom, the opening the floodgates of unceasing quarrels and divisions, horrible animosities, and bloody wars between Christian brethren. Of this there is no lack of evidence.

Witness how Pope Gregory VII., otherwise called Hildebrand, in the eleventh century, attempted to dethrone the Emperor of Germany (Henry IV.), because he would not submit to his dictates,—how he released his subjects from fealty to him, denounced him with the curse of the Church; and instigated some of his nobles to make war against their liege lord; until all Germany was rent into two hostile parties, one holding with the Pope, the other with the Emperor, until fields were covered with the blood of of these contending Christians. Witness what occurred in Bohemia two or three centuries later on, because these people would not submit to be deprived of the cup in receiving the Holy Sacrament; and when a revolt in consequence of this arose, the Emperor of Germany was called upon to send his armies and extirpate these people as heretics, who nevertheless made a valiant defence, and came off victorious, but with immense slaughter of the Christians on both sides.

Nor can the terrible massacre in France by the Roman Catholics, on St. Bartholomew's Day, be forgotten; and that after it the Pope had a medal struck to commemorate what was regarded as a glorious event for the Church of Rome. Nor can we in England forget how the Pope, in the days of Queen Elizabeth,

attempted to annul her sovereignty, by releasing her subjects from their allegiance to her, and inciting a rebellion against her. And, when this failed, how a fleet was fitted out, called the Spanish Armada, which the Pope promised largely to subsidise, to descend upon the shore of England to conquer this country, and subdue her people to the Papal domination; when it was found that Englishmen of all classes, including even those who were Papists, were loyal to their Sovereign, and that such unhallowed and nefarious designs only made them rally the closer round her standard; resolving to die, if needs be, for their country's liberty; then it was that a providential deliverance was wrought for us, which, as Englishmen, we ought ever to keep in thankful remembrance, for the awful peril which threatened this country was mercifully averted.

Now such events as these would never have happened, nor would the occasion have been given for the sad dissensions and divisions of Christians that afterwards arose all through Christendom, had it not been that the Church of Rome in the first instance had departed from the basis of unity inaugurated by Christ and His Apostles, and which the ancient Catholic Church had faithfully received and loyally acted upon as the rule of faith and action for all Churches and for all Christians. It was nothing less than a Satanic ambition on the part of the Romanists and their Bishops, that, not content with the honourable position assigned to them, and taking their part along with

others, their equals, in governing the Church—and at the same time looking well after that portion of the Lord's heritage committed to their charge—they should attempt to subject other independent Churches to their dominion, contrary to all Catholic rule, that they might reign alone, over all; arbitrarily interfering in the affairs of other Churches where they had no business or canonical right, dictating to them not only what they should do, but what they should believe, whether it were Scriptural or not.

It was not likely that other Churches and other Christians would voluntarily submit to such enthralment, and be content to be deprived of their lawful rights and liberty without many a struggle and protest, or be compelled to acknowledge what they did not believe in, and to adopt superstitious practices and views which they abhorred. Nor was the Papacy of any real good to the Church of Rome itself; it proved very detrimental to its spiritual character and condition, as its history shows; for not only did enumerable schisms arise within her, but at times she became, as it were, a sink of moral depravity, so that even in high quarters wickedness of various kinds abounded. Besides which, the Papacy has made the Church of Rome so thoroughly uncatholic that her very features are altered, and she is no longer the same as in the pristine days of her vigour, when she was faithfully and loyally one with the other Churches of Christendom, in carrying out our Lord's will, rather than following her own.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SAD CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DEPARTURE FROM THE BASIS OF UNITY.

WE are now drawing towards the point from which we started, and are about to consider what gave rise in these latter days to the many serious separations and estrangements of Christians from one another. Notwithstanding the persecutions at the first, and the heresies that the Church had afterwards to contend against: notwithstanding the gradual and grievous departure of the Church of Rome from the Catholic and Apostolical basis of Christian unity, and the perpetual contests and struggles that were kept up against the encroachments of the Papacy, and its growing political power: notwithstanding its oppressive exactions, its cruel, anti-christian and often bloody tyranny, Christians still clave in a wonderful and exemplary manner to the unity of Christ's Church. It is a remarkable thing—considering the confusion and oppression of those times—that for centuries before the Reformation there was no great endeavour or desire to separate from the Catholic (as distinct from the Roman) Church, or to set up communities or bodies of Christians antagonistic to it. And this no doubt arose from an abiding sense of, and regard to, our blessed Saviour's dying wish and prayer that

all those who truly believed on Him should be *one*. They seemed as if they would endure anything, and struggle on as best they could, rather than be the cause or instrument of rending the mystical body of Christ asunder. This should have great weight with thinking Christians, and should constantly be borne in mind in what is yet to be noticed.

The Reformation in England was, as it has been justly said, a great national movement: so that, though the Popes of Rome had for generations through political influence fettered the Church of England, insisting upon sanctioning the appointments to Bishoprics, binding those consecrated to obey the Pope, and in doing this, securing high positions for those most attached to the interests of the Papacy, and consequently had a certain degree of power in the country, still these very people in favour of Rome were unable to resist the almost universal desire to be free from the Papal yoke, and many of them, seeing the false position they were in, were carried away with the national current of feeling. England had suffered terribly from the exactions that had been made, and began to abominate the corrupt practices which the Papacy had forced upon her. Not unfrequently some of the best livings in the Church were filled up by Italians and other favourites of the Papacy, who carefully drew the emoluments, but left the people untended, so that it came to be said that they cared more for the fleece of the flock than for their souls. Such things as these were very galling to the English.

Hume tells us, in his History of England, that "Pope Honorius, in 1226, complaining of the poverty of the See (of Rome) as the source of all grievances, demanded from every Cathedral two of the best prebends, and from every convent two monks' portions, to be set apart as a perpetual and settled revenue of the Papal crown. . . . About three years after, the Pope demanded and obtained the tenth of all ecclesiastical revenues, which he levied in a very oppressive manner; requiring payment before the clergy had drawn their rents or tithes, and sending about usurers who advanced them money at exorbitant interest. In the year 1240, Otho the legate, having in vain attempted the Clergy in a body, obtained separately, by intrigues and menaces, large sums from the prelates and convents, and on his departure is said to have carried more money out of the kingdom than he left in it. This experiment was renewed four years after with great success by Martin the Nuncio, who brought from Rome powers of suspending and excommunicating all clergymen who refused to comply with his demands. The King, who relied on the Pope for the support of his tottering authority, never failed to countenance these exactions. Meanwhile, all the chief benefices of the kingdom were conferred on Italians: great numbers of that nation were sent over at one time to be provided for; non-residence and pluralities were carried to an enormous height." (Vol. II., p. 159.)

But why did England submit to this grievous foreign yoke? Two reasons at once present themselves.

In a dark age both the people, the nobles, and their sovereigns, had been grossly imposed upon, and by forged documents and base misrepresentation had been led to believe that the Pope had a power from above to damn them, and shut them out of heaven if they opposed him. And secondly, they dreaded the breaking entirely with Rome, because of the national troubles that the Popes would have brought the country into. But still, from the very time when these tyrannous measures arose, there had been frequent protests and strenuous efforts made to resist them in England as well as elsewhere.

Though William the Conqueror had the countenance of the Pope in the invasion and conquest of this country, and therefore in some degree felt indebted to him for his support, he nevertheless denied the Pope's authority in England. For when Pope Hildebrand—the Pope who brought the Emperor of Germany to his knees in abject submission to sue for peace—sent his legate Hubertus to gather up the Peter-pence and to require an oath of allegiance and fidelity to the Pope from him, the King, in his letter, sent him this message: “Your legate Hubertus, religious father, coming unto me, admonished me on your part that I would swear fidelity to you and your successors, and consider better of the money which my predecessors used to send to the Church of Rome; one of these things I have admitted, the other I have not admitted; I would not then, neither will I now swear to be faithful to you, because I never promised any such

thing, neither do I find that my predecessors did ever do so to your predecessors." (Ex. Lanfranc Epist., A.D. 1079, p. 555.) From whence, it has been observed, that neither William the Conqueror nor his predecessors were absolutely subject to the Pope (for then he durst not have sent him such an answer), and by consequence the Pope, even then, had no absolute jurisdiction in this realm.

And when William the Conqueror was dead, and his son, William Rufus, reigned in his stead, he did openly and expressly assert, that "no Archbishop nor Bishop of his Kingdom should be subject to the Court of Rome or the Pope," and the reason he gave for it was "because they do not follow the steps of Peter, gaping after rewards; they do not retain his power, whose holiness they are proved not to imitate." It was in this King's reign, also, that the Archbishop Anselm, being denied leave by the King to go and fetch his pall from Pope Urban, when he would have had to swear fidelity to the See of Rome, presently appealed to the Pope from the King, upon which the King plainly told him, "that if he would desist from his purpose, and promise upon the Gospels that he would not visit the thresholds of the Apostles, nor for any business appeal to the seat of Rome, then he might peaceably use and enjoy his own and his friends' goods, and be over the principal in every gift; but if he should purpose otherwise, it would be free for him to go over the sea, but that he would do unwisely, for he should never have hope of

returning home again." Nay, Anselm himself, in writing to Pope Paschal, says: "I asked leave of the King to go to the Apostolic seat, to ask^d counsel about my soul and the office enjoined me. The King answered, that I sinned against him for the very asking of this leave; and he propounded to me that I should either make satisfaction for this thing as for a fault, and assure him that I would never more ask such leave, nor ever after appeal to the See of Rome, or else that I should presently go out of his kingdom." (Anselm Epist. 40, ad Pasch.)

In the reign of Henry I., also, the Pope had small power in England, for the latter complains to the King that, "the messengers or letters of the Apostolical seat obtain no reception or entrance into your dominion without the command of the royal majesty: there are no appeals from thence, no judgment from thence appointed to the Apostolical seat." (Pasch. Pap. Epist. ad Hen. reg. Angl.: vid. Cat. Cott. MSS. p. 188.) And in Henry the Second's reign, there were several laws and constitutions made at Clarendon, which the Clergy and Nobility subscribed, such as that the Peter's pence should no more be paid to the Apostolical seat; that no decree or command proceeding from the authority of the Pope, or the Archbishop of Canterbury (Thomas à Becket, then out of the Kingdom in defiance of the king and the laws of the country), be received in this realm: and among other things it was decreed, as an ancient custom of this realm still to be observed, "that no

appeals be made to the Apostolical see, without leave from the King or his officials." From all which it appears that originally the Pope had no authority or right to interfere in the affairs of the Church of England. (Beveridge.)

There was a time, however, when in the reign of King John—a weak and wicked king—the Pope by his crafty policy gained some power in this country and made it smart for resisting his authority, by placing it under a terrible interdict. The King had done grievous wrong in seizing the revenues of the Bishops and Clergy, and on one occasion having compelled the Clergy to give him a hundred thousand pounds. Several of the prelates then appealed to the Pope; and upon the King's refusing to promise restitution and amendment, the Pope proceeded to depose him, and gave his dominions to the King of France, who forthwith prepared to make a descent upon England; the King sues for peace with the Pope, resigns his crown to the Pope's legate, and receives it again upon paying homage to the Pope. Parliament, however, declared his homage to the Pope not to be binding. The English Church and the Barons, with Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, at their head, refused to support the King unless he granted the Magna Charta, which was wrested from the King; and four-and-twenty Barons were chosen from the general body of this order to enforce its observance on the King, with the right of declaring war against him if its provisions

were infringed. This great Charter, which is looked back upon as the basis of English liberty, provides in the first place, as it is well known, that the Church of England have her liberties secured, and shall enjoy all her rights and privileges without diminution or disturbance; and particularly the necessary and fundamental right of electing her own Bishops. The Charter itself, it has been noticed, introduced no novelty, nor did it claim to establish any new constitutional privileges. The Church had shown its power of self-defence in the struggle over the interdict; and the Charter recognised its rights, and "the rights of Englishmen at large, their rights to justice, to security of person and property, to good government." "No freeman," it stated, "shall be seized or imprisoned, or dispossessed, or outlawed, or in any way brought to ruin: we will not go against any man nor send against him save by legal judgment of his peers or by the law of the land." Another article ran thus, "We will not sell, or deny or delay, right or justice." Again it said, "No scutage or aid shall be imposed in our realm save by the Common Council of the realm." Thus the rights and liberties of the Church, independently of the Pope, were bound up with the rights and liberties of the English nation.

John was in an impotent rage, and cried, "they have given me four and twenty over-kings;" and without much delay, sent ambassadors to the Pope, acquainting him with what he called the rebellion of the Barons, and of their having forced him to give

them a charter of their liberties of which he sent a copy. The Pope was highly indignant that this should have been done without consulting him, since he regarded the English crown, in some measure, at his disposal; John having resigned it into his hands. He therefore called a conclave and pronounced the English Charter null and void; and wrote to the Barons to persuade them to give it up, which they refused to do. Learning this, the Pope proceeded to excommunicate all those who had taken up arms against the Crown, and commanded the Archbishop and his suffragans to publish it. This injunction not being attended to at once, the Pope wrote to them accusing them of conniving at the insurrection of the Barons: and finding that Langton, the Archbishop, still stood by the Barons and the Charter, the Pope proceeded to suspend him, and wrote to the other Bishops not to pay him any canonical obedience. The king attempted to put both the excommunication of the Barons and the suspension of the Archbishop into force. He collected two armies to subdue the Barons, who sought the aid of the French. And for some time the country was miserably harrassed by contending parties; to which the death of John at last put an end. (Collier, Green.)

Save with the exception of this reign, "there was never a time," as Lord Selbourne says, "when the independence and liberties of the Church of England were not, to a large extent, practically maintained against the encroachments of the Court of Rome, or

when its rights and organisation as a National Church were not protected by English law." (Def. Ch. p. 8.) The many Acts of Parliament, and the Statutes that were enacted, prove that though the Pope still contrived to interfere in the affairs of the English Church, and to draw various large sums of money from this country, his power was limited and frequently restrained. It was not, however, till Henry VIII. quarrelled with the Pope that the King resolved that the Church of England should be entirely free from its bondage and submission in any wise to Rome. There is no doubt that he was incited to this from his imperious desire to be no longer thwarted in his purposes by the Pope. It must be remembered that Henry VIII. had been educated with the design of becoming a leading Bishop—if his elder brother Arthur were the King—and had been well instructed in the ancient canon laws of the Church; hence, he knew full well that the Church of England had a perfect right to her independency; and that the Church of Rome had really no rightful authority over her: therefore, by various injunctions and Acts of Parliament, he forbid any kind of payment whatsoever to be made to the See of Rome, or any appeals to be made to her, or any instructions to be taken from thence, or any kind of Papal interference being allowed in these realms. So that, henceforth, the Bishop of Rome had really no more state, authority, or jurisdiction in this country than any other foreign Bishop; nor ever had legally or canonically.

And yet it must be borne in mind, that if the Church of England had had to depend upon Henry VIII., it would never have been reformed. This is plainly evident from his getting the Act of the Six Articles passed by his Parliament, towards the end of his reign, whereby, (1) The doctrine of transubstantiation was established by law: (2) The Communion in both kinds was forbidden: (3) The marriage of priests also forbidden: (4) Vows of celibacy declared obligatory: (5) Private masses for souls in purgatory upheld: and (6) Auricular confession pronounced to be expedient and necessary to be retained. The penalties annexed to the breach of these decrees being, for the first, to be burnt as a heretic, for the others to be hanged as a felon; and in all cases to forfeit lands and goods to the king as a traitor.

It is said that Cranmer for three days together in vain lifted up his voice in Parliament against these sanguinary articles, but in spite of him they were passed; and had it not been that the King had a singular regard to this single-hearted reformer, by giving his signet ring to produce as a last resource, he would on more than one occasion have fallen a victim to the malice of the Papal party. The truth is, that, under the counsel of Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, a very able and astute man, who had gained some influence over the King, the latter, though still firmly resolved that the Pope should have no authority or jurisdiction in his kingdom, began to

hark back to the errors and superstitions which the Roman Church supported.

Earlier on the King had been induced to favour a translation of the whole Bible into English: and orders had been given that a Bible should be fixed in every parish Church for the use of the Clergyman and his parishioners; and under his sanction, "the Institution of a Christian Man," was drawn up for the direction of the Bishops and Clergy, which in many points favoured a reformation. But afterwards he caused another work to be published, called "the Necessary Erudition." And whoever will take the trouble to compare this work with "the Institution," will perceive at once that Henry VIII. had no desire or intention to promote any further the Reformation of religion in this country. In the preface to "the Erudition," which the King himself wrote, he explains that it is not necessary for all classes of the people to read the Bible, but "that liberty and restraint in this matter is to be referred to the laws and government: and the legislature now *lately had barred several ranks reading the Bible.*"

The "Erudition" speaks plainly for Transubstantiation which the "Institution" does not. The "Erudition" insists on the sufficiency of receiving under one kind, of which there is not a word in the "Institution." And, on the other hand, the "Institution" declares good men happy, not upon the score of their own performances, but through the mercy of God, and the passion of Christ, of which in this place the "Erudition"

mentions nothing. In short, where the "Erudition" differs from the "Institution," it is chiefly shown in going backwards from the Reformation scheme. Moreover, it should be noted that the "Institution" was the act of the whole Clergy, and subscribed by both Houses of Convocation; but the "Necessary Erudition" was drawn up, it is said, only by a committee of the king's nomination.

The main work of the Reformation of the Church of England was undoubtedly effected in the reign of Edward VI., though she suffered great loss in her temporalities. Space forbids us to enter fully into what was done. Though Henry the VIII. had rather retarded the work of the Reformation towards the close of his reign by favouring the Romish party and their views, yet had he rendered the Church of England thoroughly free from the interference of the Pope, and she was, therefore, free to determine what steps she should take for her own interests and future standing. And, supported by the great body of the people, the Reformation of the Church of England proceeded from within her own body; it was not dictated by the Sovereign, nor forced upon her by Parliament; the Reformation was from within the free act and work of the Church of England herself in her lawful Convocations, which the King and Parliament afterwards confirmed and established.

And the *principles* upon which the Reformation of the Church of England was carried out, were not to take any private interpretation of Scripture, and to

adapt the Church thereto, as to what it should be, and what doctrines it should hold; for these views would be many and diverse, and would have led to confusion. But the Reformer went back to the times of the Primitive Christians, and *tried* to refashion their Church—its Faith, Constitution, and Rules—as far as possible after the model they had, retaining all that was agreeable to Scripture, and what had been universally accepted in the Catholic Church for nearly 600 years, but rejecting and casting aside all the accretions, corruptions, and errors, which in the course of time had accumulated, which were not in accordance with them, though they may have been sanctioned by Popes and Councils of the Church.

Early in the reign of Edward VI., the Book of Common Prayer, and the Administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies, were compiled from the old service books, "*agreeable to the order of the Primitive Church,*" as the preamble of the Act states. It was drawn up by a committee of Bishops and learned divines, as it is known, with Cranmer at their head; the whole Book being framed and set forth by *the common agreement and full assent both of Parliament and Convocations Provincial—i.e.,* the two Convocations of Canterbury and York. This was shortly after revised, and, with several additions, what was called the Second Book was issued, A.D. 1551. This was one of the chief and most important works of the Reformation. The Act of Parliament appointing the Communion in both kinds, and the people to receive

it with the priest, went on the ground of its having been "the practice of the Church for five hundred years after Christ," and its being "the primitive practice."

The principles of the Reformation were further taught and set forth by *Forty Two* Articles of Religion, which Cranmer drew up with the aid of Bishop Ridley, and then submitted to several other Bishops. The King and his Council had given orders for this book of Articles to be written for preserving the peace and unity of the Church. They were carefully examined by a commission, that they might pass the Convocation and be published by royal authority. This was done that the Clergy might everywhere subscribe to them, and an harmony of teaching and action secured in the Reformed Church. These *Forty Two* Articles were afterwards revised by Archbishop Parker and reduced to *Thirty Nine*; and in them we have the substance of what was drawn up in Edward VIth reign. They are not required of the Laity—the confession of the ancient Creeds being sufficient for them—but they are a bond of agreement whereby the Laity have a security, that nothing shall be taught them or done inconsistent with what is there set down.

In short, the Church of England returned to the ancient basis of Catholic unity for all Churches and Christians, expurgating only what was novel and unauthorised, and had not been universally received by the Church as sound. Thus was she remodelled after the pattern of the Primitive Church; and what was

sufficient for the salvation of the early Christians in her best and purest days, when she was *one*, and displayed such remarkable faith in Christ and His truth, was enough for the Reformers; and what had not been required of old as necessary to salvation was not to be required of God's people now. This Reformation of the Church of England, therefore, rendered her the more truly Catholic, because she was in agreement with what the Catholic Church was during the first five or six centuries of the Christian religion. If she had altered her constitution so as not to be in keeping with the ancient Church of Christ; if she had adopted a new kind of government which the Christians of old had not recognized; if she had demanded new articles of *faith*, which had not been demanded of them, and had no warrant in Scripture for: then so far, and in that degree she would have ceased to have been a true branch of the Catholic or Universal Church. She would have departed from the basis of true Christian unity.

But as Bishop Jewel says—and it is our proud boast:—“We are come as near as possibly could be to the Church of the Apostles, and of the old Catholic Bishops and Fathers, and have directed, according to their custom and ordinances, not only our doctrine, but also the Sacraments, and the Form of Common Prayer.” (Apologia, p. 156.) The Act for the Royal Supremacy (1559) declared that such persons as should be commissioned by the Queen to reform and order ecclesiastical matters should judge

nothing to be heresy, but what had been already so judged by *the authority of the Canonical Scriptures, or by the first four General Councils, or by any other General Council in which such doctrines were declared to be heresies by the express and plain words of Scripture.* All other points not so decided, were to be judged by Parliament, *with the assent of the Clergy in their Convocation.* (I. Eliz. c. 1.)

During the reign of Queen Mary the Reformation was set aside, but when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne it was again established. And when the Pope could not persuade her to undo it all—when he found he could not depose her, or shake the allegiance of her subjects—when the Spanish Armada, which he had promised largely to support to subdue England to the Papacy, came to nothing; and he saw that the Reformation was being generally accepted, and even the Papal party in the country were conforming to it, and still continued to attend their parish churches, the Pope, determined to sow the seeds of division and dissension, and do all he could to thwart and overthrow if possible the work of the Reformation. For eleven years of Elizabeth's reign those who had been in favour of the Papacy continued to worship in the Reformed Church, when the Pope, under the threat of excommunication and damnation, ordered them to separate and form another body of their own. This was the commencement of the Romish schism in England. Nor was he content with this. There were some who wanted to

carry the Reformation to further lengths, and to overthrow the regimen of ancient Catholicity, not distinguishing between what was Catholic and what was Papal. The opposition to Papal tyranny and abuse had raised up a spirit of discontent, and a determination to proceed to further lengths among a number led on by their own private judgment in religious matters, which could not be allayed all at once. And the Pope took advantage of this feeling to stir up further discord; and those who were opposed to the Papacy were secretly persuaded to separate from the Reformed Church, and set up separate communions of their own. An instance of this was discovered in the case of Heath, a Jesuit.

He had been sent over to this country by his superiors to pretend that he was a Dissenter. He was furnished with several Anabaptistical and Arian tracts; and was to throw in a mixture of Puritan doctrines into his teaching. This man, after six years' preaching about the country in the habit of a poor minister—such as Wyclif had sent forth—applied to the Dean of Rochester for preferment, who, to try his talents, gave him a turn in the Cathedral. It happened, however, that he dropped a letter out of his pocket, which led to his discovery, for the sexton took it to the Bishop. It was addressed to him under the name of Thomas Fine, from another notable Jesuit in Madrid, and purported to give him instructions about the management of his mission. Upon being examined, he owned to having been a Jesuit,

but was now of another persuasion, and was entirely with the Reformers. But upon his lodgings being searched, a license from the Jesuits was found, and a bull from Pius V. In this document there was a discretionary power for preaching what doctrine his superiors thought fit. This permission was allowed in order that feigning himself a Protestant he might promote discord and division among the Reformers. (Collier.) Thus, besides the Romish schism, the adherents of the Pope fostered and stirred up other separations from the Church; on the design of "divide and conquer." Hence we are much indebted in this country to the Church of Rome for the separations and dissensions that exist among the Christians.

The multiplication of sects in this country was, moreover, fostered by *the followers* of Calvin, and other foreign divines who found themselves isolated from the Churches of their own land by the domination which the Church of Rome exercised over them. The Reformation on the Continent was carried on in a different manner to what it was in England. The Pope still managed to keep the Bishops of the Church in the several nations of Europe subject to his rule. They had lost their independency: contrary to the Canons of the first four or five General Councils of the Church, the Church of Rome had robbed them of it, and was dominant over them. Nor did the Sovereigns of these countries dare to strike or make any resolute effort to release their Churches from

their bondage to Rome. They had the fear of the Pope's anathemas before them, his releasing their subjects from their allegiance, and stirring up civil war in their kingdoms, or setting other sovereigns to make war upon them, and so they were content to let things drift on under the domination of the Pope.

But it must not be supposed that these National Churches quietly acquiesced in their submission to the Papal dictates without a struggle—and that a hard struggle in some instances; and yet in time they had to yield, and many of the very devout and most earnest-minded Christians were compelled to leave the Churches of their country, and, separating, to form other Communion; for the Papal party insisted upon their receiving the additional Articles of Faith which had been added to the Creed by Pius IV, and following the corrupt practices of the Church of Rome, which as honest men in their consciences they could not do: and therefore they came out from the Church. And in doing this, it is generally felt that they were justified, for the Church of Rome had really no authority given to it to impose such measures upon them: most of those who separated highly valued the ancient basis of unity in Christ's Church, but they valued the truth of the Gospel and obedience to Christ's word more highly, and they must cleave to the latter, though for a time, as they thought, they must leave go of the former outwardly. But in this a necessity had been laid upon them: for as it has

been justly said :—“ Separation is justified when sinful terms of communion are imposed.....When a Church *justifies* evils and errors, and after all means are used, persists and punishes men for using these means, it may become a duty at last to secede. But this only after all means are tried.”

It could not in any fairness, however, be said that the Church of England had thus imposed sinful terms upon her members, when she required nothing to be believed or accepted as necessary to salvation but what could be clearly proved from Scripture, and had been accepted by the Primitive Christians, and the general consent of the ancient Catholic Church. And therefore those who chose to dissent and separate from the Church of England had not the justification for doing this that those had who separated from the Churches abroad; hence also they are justly condemned for breaking the unity of Christ's Church, without sufficient cause, which is in itself sinful, and an opposition to Christ: and chiefly arises from perversity of spirit, love of contention, and a vain conceit in certain men of their own opinions. Hence in the Reformation settlement any such attempts were strongly disapproved of; for in the XXXIVth Article it is stated :—“ Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to God's Word, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like), as he that

offendeth against the common order of the Church.” Those who abroad had separated from the Church under circumstances which cleared them from guilt, now began to feel the difficulty of their position, which you may be sure the Papal party tried to make the more annoying; and as their numbers increased they needed more clergy to look after and minister to the people, and to supply their places, to keep their adherents to the true faith as it was in Jesus, when they were gone; but instead of waiting God’s time and way—and in this there was a trial of their patience and faith in God—and doing as the Church in America did in a like emergency, and sending fit and proper persons to be ordained by Bishops of the Reformed Churches, they, who had no authority given them in the Church to ordain ministers for themselves, set up a new kind of government in their societies which was contrary to Apostolic ordinances; and then began to justify the steps they had taken, and to seek to make Scripture bend to them, so as seemingly to support what they had done; and which for 1500 years had been considered unlawful and contrary to Scripture. This was spoken of as the “New Light,” and not content with this, they began to speak against the Episcopacy, and the Church, which Christ and his Apostles had ordained, and to set both one and the other at nought. And to spread their new notions abroad they began to encourage those who had separated from the Church in these realms, to adopt the same views as themselves,

and to take similar measures; so that divisions and dissension grew rapidly in this country, till, at the time of the Rebellion, an attempt was made to overthrow the Church altogether.

Now the original cause of this is surely to be traced up to the Papacy in not suffering these Christians to remain in the Church unless they consented to receive their heretical doctrines and corrupt superstitious ways and customs. And the authority by which these were imposed upon the Churches, was through the Council of Trent. For centuries before those Churches that acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope, had been taught these errors, and been accustomed, in some measure, to the ways of the Papacy; but yet many continued in the Church without believing in them, or falling in with them; but now by the decrees of the Council of Trent they were made obligatory. Their belief in them was declared to be necessary to salvation, and they were not to be allowed to partake in the ordinances of religion, or to receive the Sacraments of the Church, unless they did acknowledge these errors as truths, and so their separation from the Church became compulsory; but the sin and blame was not with them, but those who decreed these measures. But now let us see how far the Council of Trent had authority to enjoin them.

Even if it had been a General Council, and carried on honestly and fairly, what right, we may ask, in the first place, had the Bishops assembled to

enjoin that which God had not enjoined, but which, in many instances, were contrary to the tenor and spirit of His written Word? The Church in her Primitive Councils had never dared to do this; nor had she attempted this in her early General Councils afterwards. What new power or authority had the Church, even in Council, got since then, to enforce the decrees they did at this Council of Trent? None! They simply acted on the principle of the heretical Churches: "We will make what decrees we think fit, without regard to Scripture or the Ancient Church; and if you will not agree with what we say and determine, we will thrust you out of the Church."

The Council of Trent, however, had but the semblance of an Œcumenical Council. From Dr. Stillingfleet's account (see his "Rational Account," Chap. viii., printed the year after the close of this Council), it was a *packed* Council; and was neither free nor general. Not free, because the Pope, the chief person to be reformed, was President of it, and had it all his own way, and proposed all things by his Legates; and because none had *suffrage* in it, but such as were sworn to him and the Church of Rome. And as it was not free, so neither was it General; for the *Greek* Churches had no Bishops chosen and sent to represent them; and who, in the early General Councils, had always taken a prominent part. And as for the Western Churches, in all the Sessions under Paul III., there were but two French Bishops, and sometimes none, as in the Sixth Session under

Julius III., when the French King protested against the Council. And though three Bishops from England went to the Council, for a few were still inclined to the Papacy during this transition state, they were not sent thither by any authority from the Church and State of England.

And when Seignior Scipio, a noble of Venetia, expostulated with Bishop Jewel—whose acquaintance he had made—that the English nation had taken no notice of the Council of Trent, nor had sent thither any representatives; the Bishop first observes that “the English were not the only nation which declined coming to Trent; that the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria stood off: that the Churches of the Abyssines, the Greeks and Armenians, the Christians in Egypt and Barbary, in Persia and India, sent nobody to the Council. And to instance Europe; did the Crowns of Sweden and Denmark (he asks), the Princes of Germany, the Republics of Switzerland, the Kingdom of Scotland, to mention no more, comply with the summons? And since so many countries were unrepresented at Trent, it is somewhat odd to wonder at the English.”

The Bishop proceeds further to object against the Council, “because it was convened by the Pope and not by the Emperor,” as the General Councils had formerly been, whereby fairness in the proceedings had, for the most part, been secured, and the independency of the Bishops upheld. And still further, says the Bishop, because of the wickedness of the

present Pope, Pius IV., in whose name the additions to the Creed had been unlawfully added: "since he made his way to the chair by simony, and bribing the Cardinals: and that instead of paying his debts to Cardinal Caraffa, who procured him a majority, he confined that Prelate, and dispatched him in prison." And thus, according to the Apostolical Canons, the Council, instead of being subject to him, ought at once to have excommunicated the Pope; as earlier Councils would have done.

Bishop Jewel further observes, "that the ancient Fathers declined coming to Councils when they had reason to believe them packed and prejudiced against them. Thus St. Athanasius refused to come to the Council of Sirmium; thus St. Chrysostom took no notice of the Synod *Sub Quercu*; neither would Paulinus, Bishop of Triers, appear at the Council of Milan, where he saw everything would be carried in favour of the Arians. And to make this bear in the application, he observes, the Fathers of Trent had pre-engaged themselves to the Pope, and sworn away their freedom in voting.

And lastly, he wonders the Pope should summon the English to the Council, who had already been pronounced heretics by his predecessors. "What character would they appear under? It is not likely the Council would allow them the common privilege, considering the censure passed upon their doctrine. What, then, must they take so long a journey for, to be set at the bar, and plead as criminals? By

this method they could expect nothing more, but either to recant, or have the censure repeated upon them. But to stand to the Pope's justice when they have such weighty exceptions to his authority is more than they can submit to."

Besides, as Bishop Jewel shews, there were many *Curial* Bishops in it, who had no subsistence but the Pope's purse; and of the whole number that sat in it, there were more *Italian* Bishops by one hundred and four, than of all the Christian world besides; and by such a majority his Infallibility might infallibly assure himself to have whatsoever he determined. And thus this Council did not follow the guidance of the then Catholic Church, but that of the Church of Rome. And yet this packed Council calls itself Œcumenical, and speaks of itself as the representative of the Catholic Church, professing to be guided by the Holy Ghost!

Several of the Bishops and Representatives of the Nations of Europe felt that they had been tricked by the proceedings of this Council. The Spanish Bishops even, especially the brave Archbishop of Granada, complained of foul play, and being overruled in the Council, though they were otherwise strong Papists, and were countenanced by their king. Read also the letter of Andreas Dudithius, the representative Bishop of Five Churches, to the Emperor Maximillian II., where he speaks of the cause there was to reprove the mode in which things were managed, for, among other matters, he speaks to this effect: That "though the

force of the Council was at Trent, yet their determinations were made in conclave, and if the waters happened to be up, they were forced to wait till the Holy Ghost was sent from Rome in the Pope's port-manteau."

The French Ambassador then attending the Council, writes to the King his master, That the Pope was so much the master of the Council, that *his pensioners* would do whatever they listed, however much they were remonstrated with. Indeed, the Emperor, Charles V., was once so enraged against them, that he threatened to have the Cardinal Legate, *Croce*, thrown into the river. The Protestants, moreover, of *Santa*, were invited to attend by promise of *safe conduct*; but they were fore-judged unheard; for they would not admit them as parties, but criminals; they were not suffered to debate, but to be reconciled, and that upon almost insupportable terms.

The whole Gallican Church expressed their dissatisfaction at the Council, and, for a long time afterwards, refused to admit anything that had been done, save in that one article about clandestine marriages. Nor must we omit here to recite the courageous protestation which the Ambassador of France made in the face of the Council of Trent before it closed, in the name of his King and the French Clergy, for he said: "We refuse to be subject to the command and disposition of Pius IV.; we reject, refuse, and contemn all the Judgments, Censures, and Decrees of the said Pius. And although, most holy Fathers, your religion,

life, and learning was ever, and shall be ever of great esteem with us; yet seeing, indeed, you do nothing, but all things are done at Rome rather than at Trent, and the things that are here published are Decrees of Pius IV. rather than of the Council of Trent, we *denounce* and *protest* here before you all, that whatsoever things are decreed and published in this Assembly by the mere will and pleasure of Pius, neither the most Christian King will ever approve, nor will the French Clergy ever acknowledge to be the Decrees of a General Council." (Goldast, Tom. III., p. 571.)

And can this dependence upon the will of one man, who may be an erring and fallible man, as in this case he was; and who may change what his predecessors have decreed to be right and true—can this be real Catholicism? Does it not seem to be the very reverse? Do not those who cleave to it, and rest their religion in it, seem to have mistaken the very nature of what is truly Catholic? Which is, not agreement or submission to the views or rule of one Bishop, however eminent he may be—for any one with a little consideration must see how frail, uncertain, and dangerous a foundation this is to trust in—but agreement and submission to the Faith only, to the Constitution and fundamental rules of order in the Church, as they were settled and handed down from the beginning, which were universally received, and have ever since been upheld amid all changes; and are independent of the errors and corruptions which some

have attempted to fasten upon the Church, so as to make her something very different to what she was in Primitive times. (Collier, Blunt, Hickee.)

Nor were the proceedings of the Vatican Council in 1870, when the Infallibility of the Pope was decreed, much better or more creditable than that of the Council of Trent, though the character of Pope Pius IX. stood much higher than, and could not be impeached for wrong-doing as, that of Pius IV. Still the Vatican Council was equally removed, and was, as far as it possibly could be, in reality, from being a General or Œcumenical Council, like the early Councils, where the humblest and poorest Bishop was independent, and had an equal voice with the highest in settling what was the Faith of the whole Church—not in making new articles—and making its decrees and other ordinances for the order, unity and purity of the Church on the old foundations. Consequently, the decrees of the Vatican Council, though attended by such numbers of Bishops from all parts of the world, were not Catholic, or of any value or force, except to those who were under the dominion of the Pope. For the great majority of those present were bound by solemn oath to obey the dictates of the Pope, so that they were but his vassals, and if they did not his bidding, or voted as he determined, could be turned out of their dioceses, and lose their position altogether.

The Pope not only nominates all Bishops *in partibus*, and *as many as he thinks fit*, without the consent of other Bishops; but, where he is not otherwise bound

by Concordats with the civil power, the Pope claims and constantly exercises the right of settling the choice or recommendation of the Bishops for the various Churches in union with the Papacy, and thus virtually appoints a nominee or partisan of his own to any See that is vacant. So that in most cases the Bishops attending the Vatican Council were in a great measure indebted to him for their position, and would feel bound to adopt his views and carry out his designs, whatever they might be. Moreover, in the accounts which have been given—chiefly from members of the Roman Communion, present in Rome at the time, and in close attendance upon those Bishops who formed part of the Council—we learn that undue influence was brought to bear upon those who wished to take an independent position, and chose to think and act as they conscientiously thought right, as those in the Early Œcumenical Councils did: so that they might be induced to support the wishes and propositions of the Pope. Hence it may be said—and in fact it came to this—that the Pope and his adherents made the Council declare him to be Infallible, and pass decrees taking away the little independence any of the Bishops had, and subjecting the Episcopacy, and thereby the government of the whole Church in connection with him, entirely to his will.

This was not only an insult to the whole body of the Episcopate, but a robbery, defrauding the Bishops of their inalienable rights, making them but as the deputies of the Pope in carrying out the

ministrations of the Church; they were no longer to be free agents or independent witnesses to the truth of the Divine Revelation, or supporters of Apostolic Order. Henceforth they must believe as true what the Pope declares to be the truth, though it be against their own conscientious belief; and do what he bids them, though it be not in keeping with the Word of God or what was esteemed of old to be the Catholic Rule of the Church. Things had long been verging to this in the Churches of the Roman Communion, but now the seal to this order of things was finally completed and established, whereby the Divine government of the Church through the Episcopate was virtually suppressed and set aside, and the Papal government established in its stead. But it may be said, Why so, when the Bishops everywhere still exercise authority and jurisdiction as of old in their respective dioceses? Yes, it may be answered, but *the government of the Church* is no longer in the hands of the Episcopate as Christ and His Apostles designed it to be; but in the hands of the Pope, in the hands of one fallible individual, which neither Christ nor His Apostles designed nor settled that it should be; which makes an essential difference. Besides, not one of them can *now* have the independency of true Catholic Bishops, like those of old, but are all bound to obey the Pope.

And yet the Infallibility of the Pope, and the measures decreed in accordance with it, were not sanctioned even in the Vatican Council without a

severe contest. There were many learned, courageous, and conscientious Divines who withstood the proceedings—Bishops, who in their own countries or dioceses were held in high esteem, and who had the charge of four or five times the numbers which some of the Italian Bishops had. By a Papal Bull, the whole order of the Council was settled *a priori* without discussion, and by the sole will of the Pope; the assembly having no voice whatever in the matter. All propositions proceeded from a Commission nominated by the Pope. The Bishops had the right of initiating questions: but these could not come before the Council until they had received the sanction of a special Congregation chosen by the Pope, and were finally approved by the Pope himself. More than a hundred Prelates of all nations, however, signed a protest against the order of business; expressing their fears that the authority of the Council would be impaired as wanting in truth and liberty. (Leto, 50, 51 and 144.)

When the celebrated Bishop Strossmayer spoke of the honesty of the Protestants, he was called to order by the President. When he protested against deciding matters of faith by mere majority, he was loudly interrupted by cries of "Shame! shame! Down with the heretic!" And several of the Bishops sprang from their seats, and shook their fists at the speaker.

When Monsignor Kettler spoke, he pointed out in a most forcible manner to his colleagues the ruinous effect of the proposition, by asking, "What

would remain of the Episcopate after the proclamation of Infallibility?" And his argument is said to have been so cleverly handled, that it exercised a considerable effect, since it seemed sensibly to touch most of the Fathers in the Council who held any considerable jurisdiction; and so affected some that they joined the party opposed to the Infallibility dogma. It is at this time we are told that "whosoever said or did anything in favour of Infallibility received acknowledgments, remunerations, and honours, the Pope himself condescending to act openly in this way."

When Monsignor Maret, who had inaugurated the work of opposition in France by publishing a book against the design of this Council, addressed the Assembly, he endeavoured to make the Fathers understand that to render personal Infallibility to the Pope, co-existent with the Infallibility of the Church, would be to introduce into the Catholic Faith a new mystery, similar to that of the Trinity, a dogma teaching two Infallibilities in one. As he continued to dilate on this subject, he was stopped, and told to desist; but being rather deaf he did not at once hear the command; but when he became aware of it, said, with dignity and energy, that his conscience and sense of honour impelled him to complete his speech, and he did so. A North American Bishop, also, who took up the question on practical grounds, declared that the dogma was repugnant to his countrymen, and would prove a serious obstacle to the

conversion of Protestants in America; but he also was subjected to the like treatment.

On the memorable day (July 13) which was to decide the future destinies of the Papal Church, by voting respecting the Infallibility of the Pope, out of the 692 inscribed Bishops, the "Placets" had 451; the "Non Placets" 88; while several remained neutral, and others purposely absented themselves, because they would not be parties to passing the dogma.

Soon after this the minority sent a deputation, consisting of Sinior, Kettler, Darboy, Archbishop of Paris, and three others, to the Pope, imploring him to alter the decree of assigning sole ecclesiastical power to the Pope. Bishop Kettler, on his bended knees, entreated the Pope to make some concession for the sake of peace and unity. They also informed him that they could confidently count on about *one hundred and twenty Fathers* who fully concurred in their opinion: and these were chiefly the leading Bishops in the Papal Communion. (Leto, 204, 207.)

How then can it be said that the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Pope was carried by the *general consent* of even the Papal Church? Much less can it be said to be a Catholic doctrine, or that the Council which passed it was carried on according to Catholic rule? Hence the decrees and dogmas enjoined at this Council or at the Council of Trent have little or no value as being really Catholic. We must, however, forbear saying more about this Council, since what we have already stated is surely enough to enable

the reader to form his judgment upon the value of it. Those who wish to learn more should read not only the work of Pomponio Leto, but the Letters of Quirinus.

We turn for a moment to the Lambeth Conference, or the Pan-Anglican Synod, as it is called, which is about to meet again as the assembling of the Bishops in Communion with the Reformed Church of England, and contrast it with those Councils of the Papal Church to which allusion has just been made. There are two reasons especially among others, why the injunctions and decisions of this conference, though less in number, and making less pretensions, should be of infinitely more value, and carry greater weight with them among all Christians, than those of the Vatican Council, or those of the Council of Trent. First, because it is carried on with the understanding that nothing shall be decreed except on the principles of the early Catholic or Œcumenical Councils of the Church—no new article of faith added to that which was once for all delivered to the saints, no rule or canon passed which is not in keeping with the fundamental constitution of the Primitive Church, to which the early Catholics paid the highest respect. And secondly, because every Bishop who attends is unconstrained and free to speak his mind, and give his judgment as he considers right and canonical for the welfare of the Church of Christ in general. Each Bishop is here, as of old, an independent witness of the Truth, and of the Constitution and Discipline of the

Church as received by the Primitive Christians, and takes his stand on this ancient basis of Christian Unity, which was acknowledged as the rule of the Catholic Church in its early Councils: and a number of such witnesses assembling together, from various parts of the world, their having regard to the original principles of such sacred assemblies, brings the Lambeth Conference as near as possible, in these days, to those first General Councils of the Church which, as it has been stated, Gregory the Great—one of the greatest Bishops which the Church of Rome ever had—regarded with a reverence equal to the four Gospels of our Lord.

It is a hope entertained by some English Churchmen, that the Bishops of the Anglican communion will yet rise to the full dignity and responsibilities of their position, not only as Bishops of their several Dioceses, and as Bishops of the Church of their respective countries from whence they come, but as Bishops of the whole Catholic Church, in exercising some consideration over other parts, and rendering what help they can to the Christians in those branches of the Church where the faith has been corrupted, and the proper government and discipline has been set on one side, so that they have been compelled to shift for themselves. Casaubon says: "The ancient Fathers did so attend to the government of the several flocks peculiarly committed to their charge, that they thought the care of the universal flock did likewise, in some measure, belong to them; for which reason, St. Cyprian,

St. Athanasius, St. Basil, and other persons of the same dignity, did not confine their care within the bounds of the particular Churches entrusted to them, but through the fervour of their piety, and desire of unity, extended it to the universal Church of God. . . . St. Cyprian says. . . . The Episcopacy is but one, part of which each Bishop shares, so as to have a right in the whole." See Letter by F. Meyrick, in *Guardian* of May 2, 1888.

An illustration of this principle is given in a letter from St. Cyprian to Stephen, Bishop of Rome, exhorting him to help the Christians in the city of Arles, whose Bishop "had joined himself to Novatian, and has departed from the unity of the Catholic Church." Whereby the flock were left to the ravening of wolves and a prey to the devil. Therefore, "it is ours, dearest brother, to advise and come in aid. . . . holding the balances in the government of the Church." And having alluded to the spiritual distress of those who sought the solace of their help, he continues: "For therefore, dearest brother, is the body of Bishops so large, united together by the glue of mutual concord and the bond of unity, that if any of our College should attempt to introduce heresy, and to rend and lay waste the flock of Christ, the rest may come in aid, and, as good and merciful shepherds, gather the Lord's sheep into the fold." And again, "For although we are many shepherds, yet we feed *one flock*, and ought to gather together and cherish all the sheep which Christ has sought by His own Blood and Passion ;

nor should we suffer our suppliant and grieving brethren to be cruelly disposed, and trodden down by certain persons' proud presumption." (Cyprian, Letter 68. Library of the Fathers.)

The principle has already, to some extent, been acknowledged in a former Lambeth Conference. "Happily, as I think," says Meyrick in the letter referred to, "that Conference went beyond that do-nothing-policy, and offered 'all help consistent with our principles.'" And it is for the Bishops in their united wisdom to consider what should be further done respecting the sore condition in which the Christians that should belong to other Churches have been left. May not the time have come when it might be considered by them, whether or not a respectful remonstrance should not be addressed to the Pope, and to the Bishops of other National Churches who have been brought into subjection to him, against the whole system of the Papacy, as uncatholic and contrary to the rule of Christ's Church, as laid down in the early Councils; and that, for the sake of unity—unity of those who have become separated from them in their own dioceses, as well as unity with all other Churches—an enquiry should be made whether or no they would be willing to bring about a Reformation of their Churches on the basis adopted by the Primitive Christians, and adhered to and further defined and developed on the same lines by the Catholic Church as in the first four or five General Councils. A statement at least might go forth from the

Lambeth Conference, to the Non-Conformists on the one side, and to the various Churches of Christendom on the other, that this is the basis taken by the Church of England and those Churches in communion with her, as the only way of securing a much wider, more lasting, and effectual unity for Christians throughout the world; which, to use the words of the American Church, "can be restored only by the return of all Christian communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence." And to let it go forth that they will be ready and desirous to hold brotherly Conference with any properly authorised representative individuals, or even with private persons, from any of the foreign Churches, or of any of the Non-conformist bodies, "seeking the organic unity of the Church," in order to further the great wish of our One Lord and Saviour, that His people might be One body.

Something might be done at this Synod to further the work of Unity: many are looking for it, and the time seems propitious, if it be only seized; for not only is there a yearning desire for it in many parts of the world, but many of the foreign Churches which are in bondage would welcome this deliverance, and need not now dread the Civil powers turning against them so much as aforetime, when seeking to repossess themselves of their inalienable rights and liberty.

In another volume inquiry will be further made as to how it came to pass that a return to the basis

of unity at the Reformation was so marred by the multiplication of dissensions and divisions; and in some countries was entirely frustrated; and what still hinders a larger return to it. Then we purpose to examine more fully the will and design of Christ concerning this unity, and how the Apostles endeavoured to carry it out as unfolded to us in the New Testament Scriptures, and by the witness of the Primitive Christians, as drawn from the testimony of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and other writers among them, previous to the time of Constantine, as to how they received this Divine intimation with regard to the unity of all believing Christians, and ordered themselves according to it.

END OF VOL. I.



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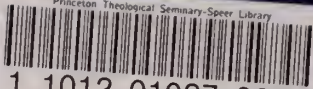
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